POUND-FOR-POUND ISSUE

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The RING

GENNADY GOLOVKIN: FROM KO KING TO P4P NO. 1

VIVA COTTO!
MIGUEL COTTO'S CAREER IN PICTURES

GGG UNPLUGGED:
GOLOVKIN OPENS UP IN EXCLUSIVE Q&A

DREAM FIGHT:
WHO WINS JOSHUA VS. WILDER?

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The RING

VOLUME 97, NO. 2

Miguel Cotto's career began with 32 straight wins, including this one against Carlos Quintana in 2006.

CHRIS FARINA

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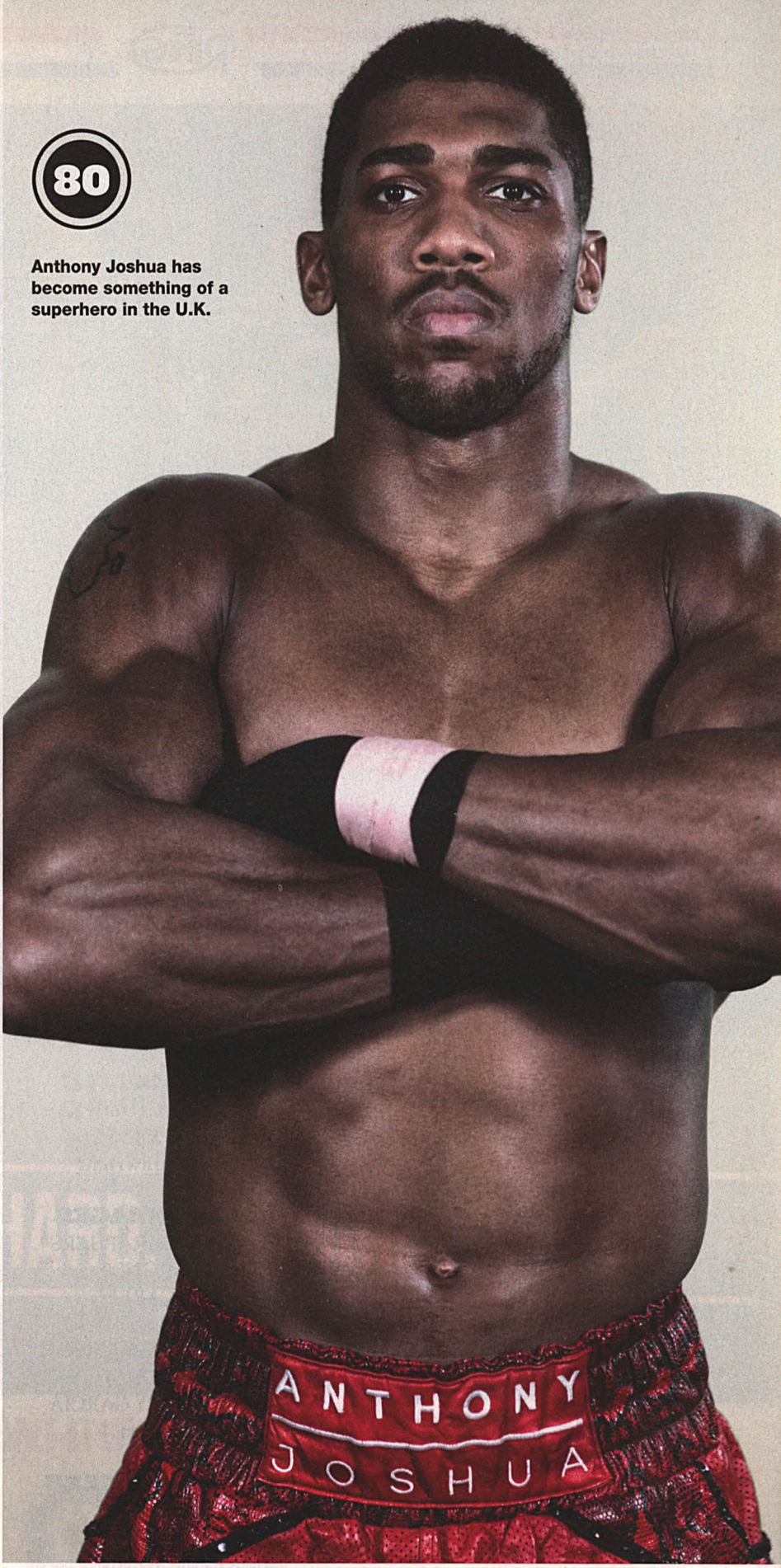

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SAY HELLO TO THE 'FAN BOY'

If you don't follow boxing via the internet, you might not know who the hell I am. So, allow me to introduce myself. My name is Doug Fischer and I've covered boxing as a reporter, columnist and editor since the internet was still regarded as "new media."

However, I started out in this business as a freelance writer, before the World Wide Web took over, and getting published in this magazine encouraged me to pursue the unlikely profession of "boxing journalist."

My first byline in THE RING appeared in the December 1995 issue (with Mike Tyson swarming a hapless Peter McNeeley on the cover). My first RING feature story, about a promising lightweight contender named Shane Mosley, appeared 20 years ago.

My love of the sport goes back further, to my childhood, when Muhammad Ali's second heavyweight title reign was in its twilight and Olympic star Sugar Ray Leonard was emerging as the new face of boxing. By the time Leonard and Marvin Hagler clashed, my interest in boxing had blossomed into hardcore obsession.

Thirty years later, I'm still a diehard fan. Decades of boxing's controversies and politics haven't dulled my passion for the sport.

When I'm not responding to emails from fellow fanatics from around the globe (for my 16-year-old Mailbag column) or providing boxing commentary on camera, I'm talking about the sport with my friends, or with neighbors, or complete strangers – in my front yard, when I pick my kids up from school, standing in line at the grocery store, at restaurants (to my wife's chagrin), anywhere!

Some have accused me of being too much of a "fan boy." Hey, guilty as charged! I have my favorites (the guy on this cover, for instance) and I don't care who that offends, including the good folks at Golden Boy Promotions.

Those who try to disrespect me with that term can kiss my fan-boy ass. Yeah, I just dished out an insult to jerk fans in my first editorial as RING Editor.

If there's a distinction between me and this magazine's previous editors, it's that I'm the first of the internet/social media age, which means I have less of a filter than my predecessors. Don't fret too much about that. It means there's going to be more of a dialogue between the magazine and its readers, more articles featuring insight from boxing insiders, and more focus on hot-button issues that impact the sport we love.

Will there be arguments? Hell yeah! But I'm open to differing opinions and criticism (as long as it's respectful), and the editorial staff will strive to present diverse views in these pages.

I respect fans and everyone who ekes out a living in the industry, especially the fighters and trainers. I have a special appreciation for the writers and the former editors of this magazine going back to founder Nat Fleischer.

A personal thank you must go to Michael Rosenthal, who I had the honor of working beside for nine years, which made me a better writer and editor. I must thank Steve Farhood for publishing those RING articles I mentioned all those years ago and for encouraging me to live this dream. Much appreciation goes to Nigel Collins for his commitment to the sport and for bringing back the RING championships.

And a very special "shout out" goes to the late, great Bert Sugar, who helped foster my love of boxing history and taught – through example – not to take myself too seriously and to enjoy the ride.

Ryota Murata (right) bounced back from his only loss with a vengeance, becoming the first man to stop Hassan N'Dam in their rematch.

NAOKI FUKUDA

COME OUT WRITING

BRIGHT FUTURE

I was extremely impressed with Ryota Murata's victory over Hassan N'Dam on Oct. 22 in Tokyo! Murata was able to do what heavy-hitters Peter Quillin and David Lemieux couldn't, stopping N'Dam for the first time in his career! In doing so, Murata avenged a loss that left many scratching their heads after the scorecards were read a few months ago. I don't necessarily think Murata is ready for guys like Golovkin or Canelo just yet. The stoppage of N'Dam is just a glimpse of greatness that is to come, though.

Davis Clouse
Omaha, Neb.

MISSING CHAMP

THE RING was founded in 1922. It published its first ratings in 1925. So how can you not have recognized a middleweight champion until 1932?

Mark Taha
Ealing, U.K.

[EDITOR'S NOTE: The middleweight championship was awarded in 1933, as were the belts for welterweight, lightweight and featherweight. In the case of Marcel Thil, he beat Gorilla Jones – who was recognized as the National Boxing Association middleweight champion – in 1932. But he won on a controversial foul, and thus was not universally recognized as the champ (by the powerful New York State Athletic Commission or by THE RING). THE RING withheld the championship until Thil beat top contender Kid Tunero in October 1933.]

50 and OH?

It's funny how we boxing fans get so consumed with numbers. The idea that Floyd Mayweather could break Rocky Marciano's record by fighting an 0-0 fighter has many fight fans refusing to give Floyd the recognition he is due. If we look at Marciano's numbers a little closer, we see victory No. 30 was against Ted Lowry, a fighter with 57 previous losses; victory No. 33 was against Harold Mitchell, who had a record of 4-14-3; victory No. 35 was against the 11-14-2 Willis Applegate; and victory No. 39 was against Lee Savold, who entered the ring with 43 losses on his record. All mismatches, yet all counted. I bet those same fight fans who refuse to acknowledge Floyd's victory over Conor McGregor surely would have counted the loss, if it had happened.

Patrick Mascoe
Ottawa, Canada

WELL DESERVED

Great to see to Belfast bantamweight Ryan Burnett add the WBA title to his current IBF strap. Ryan's path to the top hasn't been easy. After missing a year out of the sport as an amateur due to a back injury, he then failed a brain scan before his first professional fight and was told he would never box again. Determined to prove the experts wrong, Ryan went through every test needed to prove his fitness to fight. Then after just four pro fights, a split with his promoter prevented him from getting fights that resulted in the loss of his home, forcing him to sleep in his car before he was eventually taken on by current trainer Adam Booth and later, Eddie Hearn's Matchroom stable. It's a testament to Ryan's character and his team's faith in his ability that he persisted with boxing despite his setbacks, and hopefully he can now land some big fights and secure his future in the sport.

Steven Bond,
Castleford, U.K.

ENJOY THE SILENCE

Gary Isham's letter in the January edition stating that he often turns the volume off during TV fights prompted me to write this one. Would any boxing fan tolerate going to a fight and having three motormouths yelling in your ear? So why do we endure it when we watch a fight on TV? A couple years ago I started turning off the volume for Showtime broadcasts. The result was I watched the fight with greater attention and appreciation. I then did the same for HBO and ESPN. I would advise all longtime boxing fans to try it.

Gerald Maltz, former Arizona State Boxing Commissioner and judge
Tucson, Ariz.

FOND MEMORIES

I have just been reading on RingTV.com the "Best I Faced" feature on Frank Bruno. It is a great piece and a great reminder of one of our real tough professionals. Following Bruno was a real trauma sometimes – such great support, such great excitement, sometimes disappointments, real hard fights and then finally he won his world title. Being too muscled didn't help, and it is a worry we see now with Anthony Joshua. But no one can question Bruno's heart and ability in the time he boxed. Just look at who he lost to: James "Bonecrusher" Smith, Tim Witherspoon, Mike Tyson twice and Lennox Lewis. How many of today's British heavyweights could best those fighters? Bruno was in a very tough era. He was a very young man fighting Witherspoon, a hardened pro, but he lasted 11 rounds. I will never forget when he crushed Gerrie Coetzee, rocked Mike Tyson and then lifted his hands in triumph against Oliver McCall. We fans were on that journey with him and that night I think we were as exhausted as he was! Now in mental health issues, he's the same battler and credit to the U.K., trying to help other people. Thanks, RING mag, for a great trip down memory lane and thanks, Frank, for great times – and with all the stress as well. We are still your fans. Exciting times are back with Fury, Joshua, Whyte and the rest to test our nerve.

Ray Fox
Keighley, U.K.

Read the Bruno "Best I Faced" feature here: http://bit.do/brunoBIF

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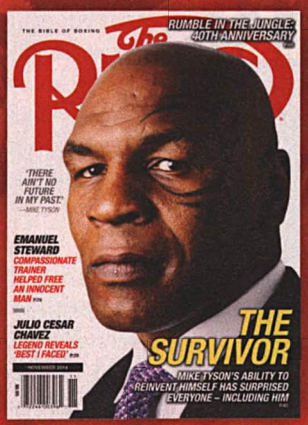

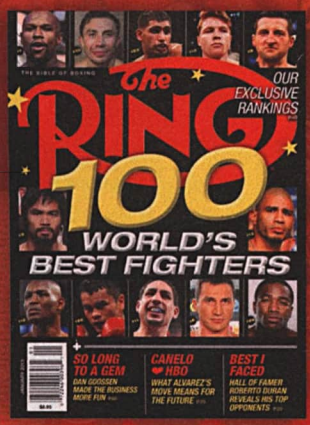

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ADVANCED DEGREES

Degrees of separation between fighters of the past and their more contemporary counterparts. This month, in keeping with the theme of this issue, THE RING connects its first pound-for-pound rankings king, heavyweight Mike Tyson, with the current one, middleweight Gennady Golovkin.

MIKE TYSON fought

FRANS BOTHA, who fought

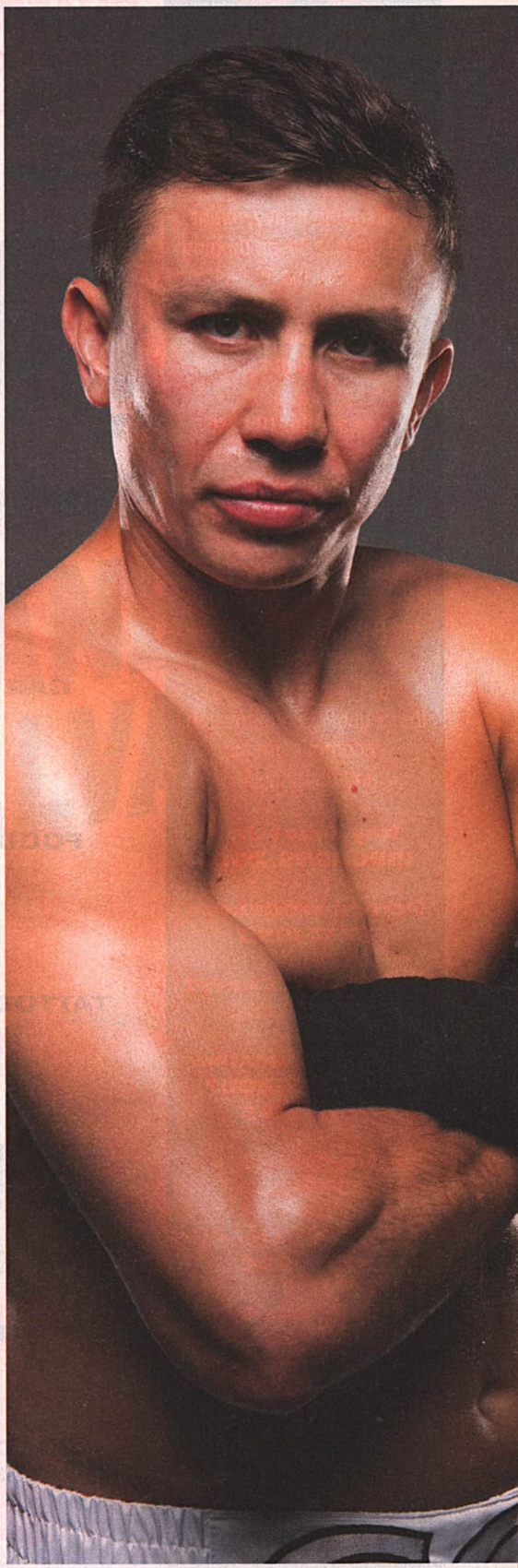
WLADIMIR KLITSCHKO, who fought

DAVID HAYE, who fought

LOLENGA MOCK, who fought

MALIK DZIARRA, who fought

GENNADY GOLOVKIN



TYSON: RING MAGAZINE; GOLOVKIN: EMILIO SANCHEZ/ GOLDEN BOY PROMOTIONS

10

A MONTHLY BOXING LIST

This month: THE RING introduced its formal pound-for-pound rankings in 1989, with then-undisputed heavyweight champ Mike Tyson topping the list of the 10 best boxers from around the globe regardless of their respective weight classes.

Here are the 10 best fighters rated No. 1 in THE RING's mythical rankings (with the years they reigned at the top of the list), according to Editor Doug Fischer. Criteria for ranking the P4P Kings include the number of years at No. 1, years in the top three, quality of opposition, accomplishments and dominance.

Roy Jones Jr. – 1996, 1999, 2003

Pernell Whitaker – 1993-1995

Julio Cesar Chavez – 1990-1992

Floyd Mayweather Jr. – 2005-2007; 2012-2015

Manny Pacquiao – 2008-2011

Oscar De La Hoya – 1997-1998

Shane Mosley – 2000-2001

Bernard Hopkins – 2002, 2004

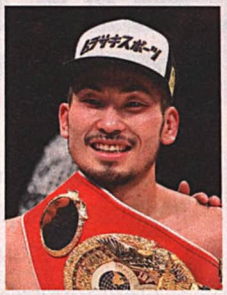
Mike Tyson – 1989

Roman Gonzalez – 2016-2017

FIGHTERS' FAVORITES

WHAT BOXERS ARE INTO OUTSIDE THE SPORT

— Anson Wainwright



FIGHTER »	RYOSUKE IWASA JUNIOR FEATHERWEIGHT TITLEHOLDER	SHO KIMURA FLYWEIGHT TITLEHOLDER	HIROTO KYOGUCHI STRAWWEIGHT TITLEHOLDER
MUSIC »	"**Tsuyoshi Nagabuchi**, a Japanese singer and songwriter."	"The song titled 'Forever Young' written, composed and performed by Takehara Pistol, a Japanese musician. I used the song as my entrance song at the bout with Mr. Zou (Shiming)."	"My favorite artist is Kreva, a Japanese rapper. I also like Tee, a Japanese singer and songwriter."
CAR »	"I have a Ferrari 458 Spider; it's also my dream car. I received it as a gift from a sponsor when I won the world title."	"I do not have any car. However, I would like to buy a **Porsche**."	"I am not interested in cars."
FOOD »	"I love fish, especially **sashimi**."	"Yakiniku (Japanese barbecue)."	"I love ramen, yakiniku and sushi."
TATTOOS »	"I have tattoos of symbols of a Japanese champion and an OPBF champion on the wrist of both arms."	"No tattoos."	"I do not have any tattoos."
ATHLETE OUTSIDE BOXING »	"Kei Nishikori, a famous Japanese professional tennis player."	"I have no favorite athlete specifically."	"**Rena Kubota**, a Japanese female shoot boxer."
MOVIE »	"Any movie starring or directed by **Jackie Chan**."	"I do not watch movies very much."	"The Green Mile, starring Tom Hanks."
VIDEO GAME »	"I don't have any."	"I like playing **mahjong** on my phone."	"I do not play any video games."

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In addition to his prowess in the ring, Miguel Cotto has always been a sharp-dressed man.

MIGUEL COTTO

41-5 (33 KOs)

Miguel Cotto is one of the most accomplished Puerto Rican boxers of all time, winning world titles in four weight classes during his 17-year pro career.

Cotto was born in Providence, Rhode Island, but his family relocated to his ancestral home in the Caribbean when he was 2 years old. He started boxing when he was 11 and enjoyed a stellar amateur career, winning silver at the World Junior Championships and appearing at the World Championships and Olympics before leaving the unpaid ranks with a record of 125-23.

Cotto turned pro in early 2001. With his fledgling years mapped out by promoter Top Rank, he got his first title shot in September 2004 against unbeaten puncher Kelson Pinto, whom Cotto stopped in six rounds for the vacant WBO junior welterweight belt.

He would make six defenses before abdicating the title to move up to welterweight, where he promptly won the WBA strap. During his reign he impressively turned back the challenges of Zab Judah and Shane Mosley – both at his home away from home, Madison Square Garden.

He feels the Judah fight was the best performance of his career.

"I felt everything came together that night." Cotto told THE RING.

Cotto lost his unbeaten record and title at the hands of Antonio

MARK J. ERNHAM

Margarito in the summer of 2008. He rebounded to collect his third world title against Michael Jennings and defended once, but then ran into a prime Manny Pacquiao. Cotto twice got off the canvas early but was stopped in the final round.

He stepped up to junior middleweight in search of a title in a third weight category and met Yuri Foreman in front of 20,000 at Yankee Stadium – the venue's first boxing event since Muhammad Ali-Ken Norton III in 1976. Cotto picked his opponent apart and eventually stopped him in Round 9.

After turning back the spirited challenge of Ricardo Mayorga and beating fierce rival Margarito in a grudge rematch, Cotto took on Floyd Mayweather Jr. Although he lost a decision, he gave Mayweather a stern test.

Cotto looked a shell of himself while dropping a decision to Austin Trout seven months later.

To his enormous credit, Cotto was able to reinvent himself under trainer Freddie Roach's tutelage. He sought out a meeting with RING and WBC middleweight boss Sergio Martinez, and the fighting pride of Caguas shocked the pre-fight favorite by dropping him three times in a frenzied opening stanza and again in the ninth. The Argentine's corner pulled their man out in the 10th frame.

"It is special for me," Cotto proudly said of being the first Puerto Rican to win major world titles in four weight classes. "I don't want to compare myself with (other Puerto Rican greats). I just think about Miguel Cotto and not anybody else. Four is just a number. I just try to do my job the best always, and I did it the night of the Martinez fight. That put me in this category."

Cotto defended his championship once but then lost to Canelo Alvarez by a unanimous decision, which Cotto insists was undeserved.

He returned from a 21-month hiatus in August to add another title to his collection, this time at 154 with a wide unanimous decision over Yoshihiro Kamegai.

Having achieved so much, Cotto could be forgiven if he'd chosen to retire already. He says he will walk away at the end of the year, but what still burns inside him to want to continue fighting at this point?

"I'm a father of four, I'm the head of my family," he said. "I want to be remembered for my family as the guy who brought everything together to bring them to best possible future. That's all I need as motivation."

Cotto, now 37, owns his own promotional company, Promociones Miguel Cotto, and he also founded Fundacion El Angel, which helps prevent child obesity. He enjoys golf (his handicap is 18) and cooking.

He graciously took time to speak to THE RING about the best he fought in 10 key categories.

BEST JAB

Ricardo Torres: I think the best jab was Ricardo Torres, the guy from Colombia. He caught me with good jabs in the fight.

BEST DEFENSE

Floyd Mayweather Jr: He was so slippery in every moment of the fight. It was so difficult to get to him.

HAND SPEED

Paulie Malignaggi: I think Paulie Malignaggi was one of the quickest guys I ever faced. At the time of our fight he came in really good shape. He came in good condition and he made me work really hard to beat him.

BEST FOOTWORK

Manny Pacquiao: I think Manny. He was so quick to get around. To hit him was very difficult for me because he moved so well.

BEST CHIN

Yoshihiro Kamegai: I hit Mayorga so hard it was so hard to believe he was still standing in front of me, but I think Kamegai had the best chin. I punched him with all my best and flush shots and the guy kept coming.

SMARTEST

Mayweather: No doubt, Floyd Mayweather. You can catch him with one good shot, but it is so hard to catch him twice that it makes me believe he is the smartest one.

STRONGEST

Ricardo Mayorga: Mayorga was the strongest opponent I ever faced. I put my hands on him and he didn't move. He was solid as a rock.

BEST PUNCHER

Randall Bailey: This guy Randall Bailey, in my first title defense back in 2004. He caught me with a good right hand but I handled it well and I did my job.

BEST SKILLS

Mayweather: Boxing and fundamentals, I would say Mayweather. The difficulty with Mayweather is that he's so hard to catch him twice with the same mistake. He had very good skills. He had all the shots.

BEST OVERALL

Mayweather: I think Floyd. He was smarter than everyone else. He was a really good boxer. He did everything about as well as anybody.

Questions and/or comments can be sent to Anson at elraincoat@live.co.uk and you can follow him on Twitter @AnsonWainwright.

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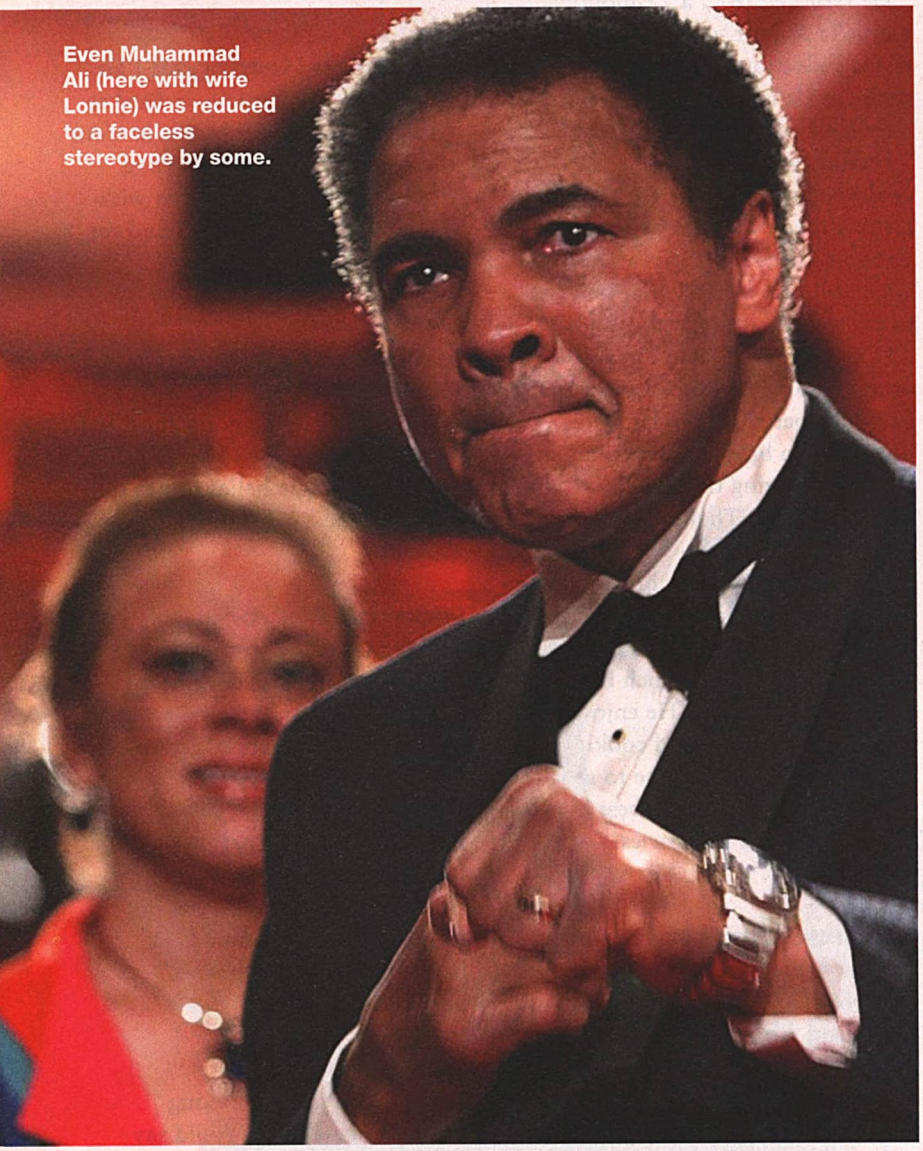


Even Muhammad Ali (here with wife Lonnie) was reduced to a faceless stereotype by some.

The dialogue over racial prejudice in the United States has gotten uglier the past few months. Let me add an experience I had years ago to the discussion.

I had a friend who was in my home with his wife on a number of occasions. They were African-American. I live in a highrise building in a residential neighborhood on the west side of Manhattan. One evening after dinner, I went down to the street with my friend, his wife, and another guest to help them into a taxi for the ride back to their hotel.

A taxi was coming toward us. The "on duty" light was on and there were no passengers in the back seat. I stepped off the curb and flagged the driver down. He blinked his lights in acknowledgement. The taxi slowed. Then the driver saw that I was with two black men and a black woman, assumed the taxi was for them (which it was), and drove off.

The three people left standing at the curb were Muhammad Ali, Lonnie Ali, and Ali's closest friend, Howard Bingham.

★★★

There were a lot of familiar faces in the media center at the MGM Grand in Las Vegas in the days leading up to Canelo Alvarez vs. Gennady Golovkin. One of them belonged to Kelly Pavlik.

Pavlik was in town to promote The Punchline, a podcast he hosts with James Dominguez that's accessible through Facebook Live, iTunes, and YouTube. He's 35 years old now, the same age as Golovkin. But Kelly's fighting days are long behind him.

"This reminds me of when I fought Jermain Taylor here nine years ago," Pavlik told me one day before the fight. "I'm like, oh man, this was my title. They say the middleweights are boxing's glamour division. And I'm part of that lineage. I was that person. That's kind of cool."

Pavlik went through some hard times after peaking in the ring. But he's in a good place now. "When you're a champion," he noted, "everyone wants to be your friend. I don't have as many friends as I had before. But I have the same number of real friends."

Does he miss fighting?

"I miss it and I don't miss it," Kelly answered. "I'd go back and do it over if I could be young again. But what I like now is I don't have to worry about making weight. I can walk around during fight week, eat cookies and drink water."

★★★

BOOKS IN BRIEF

Bare Knuckle Britons and Fighting Irish by Adam Chill (McFarland) is a well-researched study of bare-knuckle prizefighting in the 18th and 19th centuries. In the author's words, "While the fortunes of the sport ebbed and flowed, it was one of the most popular phenomena of the era. Thousands of spectators attended important matches, often walking or riding many miles to do so. Members of the royal family patronized boxers, leading literary figures wrote about them, and MPs debated the merits of boxing in the

House of Commons."

Chill is an associate professor of history at Castleton University in Vermont. His book has an academic tone and is about a specialized subject for a narrow audience. But his closing words are worth noting: "The story of bare-knuckle prizefighting reminds us that this impulse to romanticize and simplify history and sports was as alive in the eighteenth and nineteenth century as it is today."

John Ochs spent 18 years researching and writing a three-volume, 1,600-page biography of Jack Hurley, the colorful fight promoter and manager who spent a half-century in boxing dating from the end of World War I.

In a preface to the trilogy, Ochs states, "As I followed each thread of the Hurley saga to its logical conclusion, the story evolved into something much greater than that of just one man. His life was of such scope that an entire history of boxing from a promoter's viewpoint unfolded. What emerged is a tale unlike any other I am aware of, a detailed study of big-time boxing's 20th Century glory years told through the life experience of one of its greatest sole practitioners."

The preface also includes an admission by the author: "It took a few years of writing to realize no rational individual would choose to devote so much time to writing a narrative about anyone less than a major world figure. Still, I forged ahead. For better or worse. I had partnered with Jack Hurley to prove I could write a book which met the expectation of my own ideals and accomplish something meaningful on my own terms, and it had to be completed whatever the cost."

The result is a work that tells readers everything they might want to know about Hurley and more. The three volumes could, and should, have been edited down to one.

But to close on an upbeat note ... Ochs's trilogy is entitled *The One Is Jack Hurley*. That sentiment originated with journalist and short-story writer Damon Runyon, who once opined that he'd known only two honest fight managers in his life. Asked to identify them, Runyon answered, "One is Jack Hurley, and I forget the name of the other one."

The best book about Floyd Mayweather just got better.

Two years ago, following Mayweather's May 2, 2015, victory over Manny Pacquiao, Tris Dixon authored *Money: The Life and Fast Times of Floyd Mayweather*.

Now Arena Sport is publishing an updated edition that includes a chapter on Mayweather vs. Conor McGregor and gives Dixon the opportunity to, in his words, "tidy up" a few things in the original work.

The tidying up comes at the right time.

"Too often," Dixon recently told THE RING, "books are released either by or about fighters when they are at their peak. But often, there is a decline before retirement. I believe, at 50-0, that is it for Floyd's career."

And as Dixon further noted, "Floyd has gone out in one of the biggest events of his career, which in itself is unusual."

★★★

One of the nicest things about being on site for Canelo-Golovkin was the opportunity to spend time with Hall of Fame promoter Don Chargin.

Russell Peltz, another member of that exclusive club, says fondly, "Don is the only guy I look up to as a promoter. His word is good. He's as astute an analyst of boxing as any promoter I've ever known. He's made great fights his entire career. I've never heard anyone say anything bad about Don. In boxing, that makes him unique."

Three days before Canelo-Golovkin, Chargin was reminiscing about an incident at the Arco Arena in Sacramento that occurred 22 years ago.

Don and his wife Lorraine were promoting a fight card headlined by Lennox Lewis vs. Lionel Butler and Michael Moorer vs. Melvin Foster. Lorraine, as was her custom, was overseeing the fighter-media entrance. Don was on the arena floor when the head usher approached him.

"There's a problem downstairs," the usher reported.

The "problem" was Don King, who had arrived with an entourage of 10 and was demanding that he and his party be admitted free of charge. Lorraine was willing to let King in for free as a courtesy to another promoter. But no way was the rest of his group getting past her unless they bought tickets.

"It's pretty heated," the usher said. "Lorraine and King are going at it jaw to jaw."

"She can handle it," Chargin said. Then he thought better of it and headed downstairs.

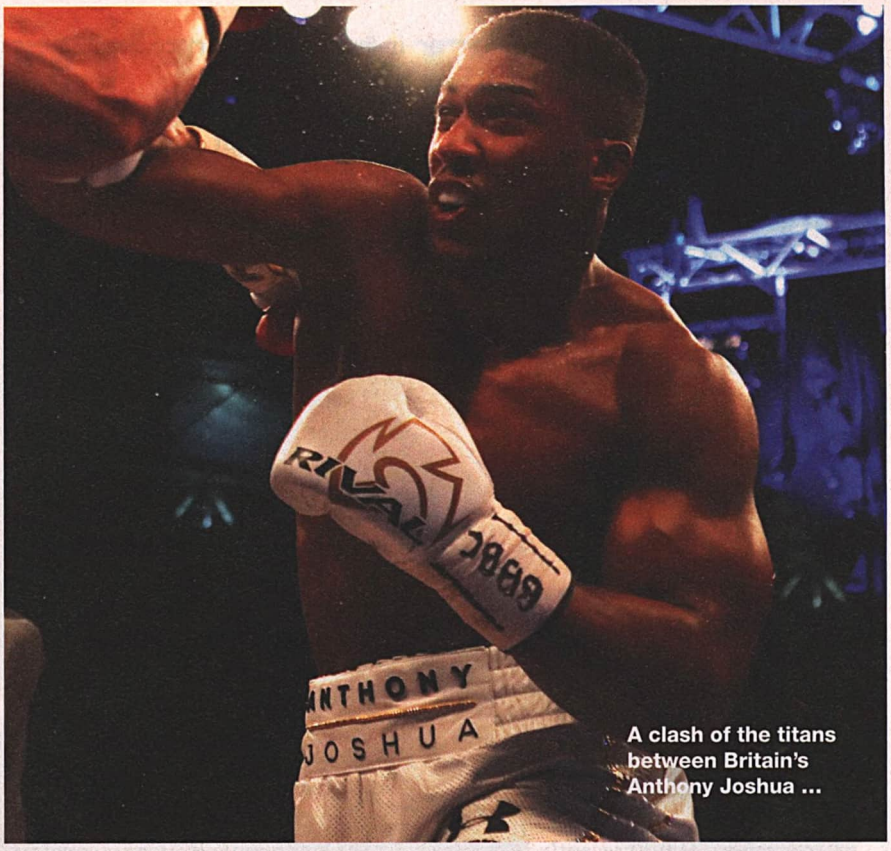
"Are you worried about Lorraine?" the usher inquired.

"No," Chargin answered. "I'm worried about what she might do to King."

Last month in Las Vegas, Chargin spoke of that long-ago night.

"By the time I got there," he recalled, "King had given up and bought tickets for his entire entourage. The next time I saw him was when I was inducted into the Hall of Fame in Canastota. He came over to me with a kind of relieved look on his face and said, 'I want you to know. I just saw Lorraine. We're OK now.'" RING

Thomas Hauser can be reached by email at thauser@rcn.com. His most recent book – There Will Always Be Boxing – was published by the University of Arkansas Press. In 2004, the Boxing Writers Association of America honored Hauser with the Nat Fleischer Award for career excellence in boxing journalism.



A clash of the titans between Britain's Anthony Joshua ...

ANTHONY JOSHUA VS. DEONTAY WILDER

...and American Deontay Wilder is a heavyweight barnburner.

THREE EXPERTS – A FIGHTER, A TRAINER AND A MEDIA MEMBER – TELL YOU HOW A POTENTIAL MATCHUP WOULD PLAY OUT

With lineal heavyweight champion Tyson Fury still in exile, Anthony Joshua vs. Deontay Wilder has quickly become the most anticipated showdown within the sport's glamour division.

This transatlantic encounter would feature two thunderous, albeit vulnerable, punchers in a three-title unification fight. Both men are undefeated with a combined record of 59-0 (58 knockouts).

There's been talk that it could go down under the bright lights of the Las Vegas Strip. There's been talk that 90,000 spectators could once again fill Wembley Stadium in London, as they did in April to watch Joshua unify the IBF and WBA titles by defeating Wladimir Klitschko. Who the hell cares? Just make it happen. This is a defining fight for both men and it has the potential to cross over and become a mainstream event.

When the bell rings, the action will be as hazardous as setting off fireworks in an elevator. You could schedule this one for three rounds and there's still every possibility that it doesn't go the distance.

Joshua is the former Olympic super heavyweight champion who came of age when he defeated Klitschko. Wilder, the WBC beltholder, still craves a big challenge, but his one-punch knockout power is a threat to any human being on the planet.

Three boxing insiders attempt to predict the unpredictable.

JOSHUA ★ TALE OF THE TAPE ★ WILDER

200+ POUNDS

JOSHUA		WILDER
28	AGE	32
20-0 (20 KOS)	RECORD	39-0 (38 KOS)
100 PERCENT	KO PERCENTAGE	97.4 PERCENT
ORTHODOX	STANCE	ORTHODOX
6 FOOT 6 INCHES (198 CM)	HEIGHT	6 FOOT 7 INCHES (201 CM)
82 INCHES (208 CM)	REACH	83 INCHES (211 CM)

FIGHTER:

HUGHIE FURY
Former heavyweight title challenger

Wilder is a good fighter but there are a lot of flaws in his game. He hasn't really fought any top opponents. His best opponent was Bermane Stiverne. Everyone else he's faced has been handpicked, so we've not really seen anything from Wilder other than these easy knockouts. Wilder is a swinger, but he misses a lot. If he comes up against an elite boxer, then I think he comes unstuck. Joshua is a good fighter and he's doing well, but what can we really take from the Klitschko fight? That was a different Klitschko, not the old one who stuck to his boxing and remained cautious. If Klitschko had fought his usual style against Joshua, I think we would have seen a completely different fight. Instead, he decided to put on a show and go for it. Who wins between Wilder and Joshua? Whoever lands first. Joshua is better technically, but if one of Wilder's hooks lands on target, you're gone. If I had to go one way, I'll pick Wilder. But it's nothing more than a feeling. It would be an exciting fight between two big hitters who are aggressive. It would be one hell of a fight to watch.

Prediction: WILDER

TRAINER:

GARY LOCKETT
Trainer of Liam Williams

I think Joshua has everything. He was a bit robotic at first, but his shape has changed since he turned professional and he looks more athletic now. His team have obviously worked very hard on his stamina and his endurance, because he looked down and out against Klitschko. But, as often happens with fighters in tremendous condition, he got his second wind and rallied to stop him. That performance proved that he's the real deal. With Wilder, the jury is still out. It shouldn't be, because he's had almost 40 fights, but a fighter can only prove themselves against good opposition and he hasn't really fought anyone. From what I've seen of Wilder, he is obviously powerful when he hits the target, but he's very wild. It's almost like his arms and his legs don't work in coordination with each other. It's heavyweight boxing, which is known for springing surprises, but I would fancy Joshua to be a bit more controlled. I think he would capitalize on Wilder's mistakes, catch him with a big shot and stop him. I also think it goes early, because two big guys slamming away on each other doesn't suggest that it'll go long.

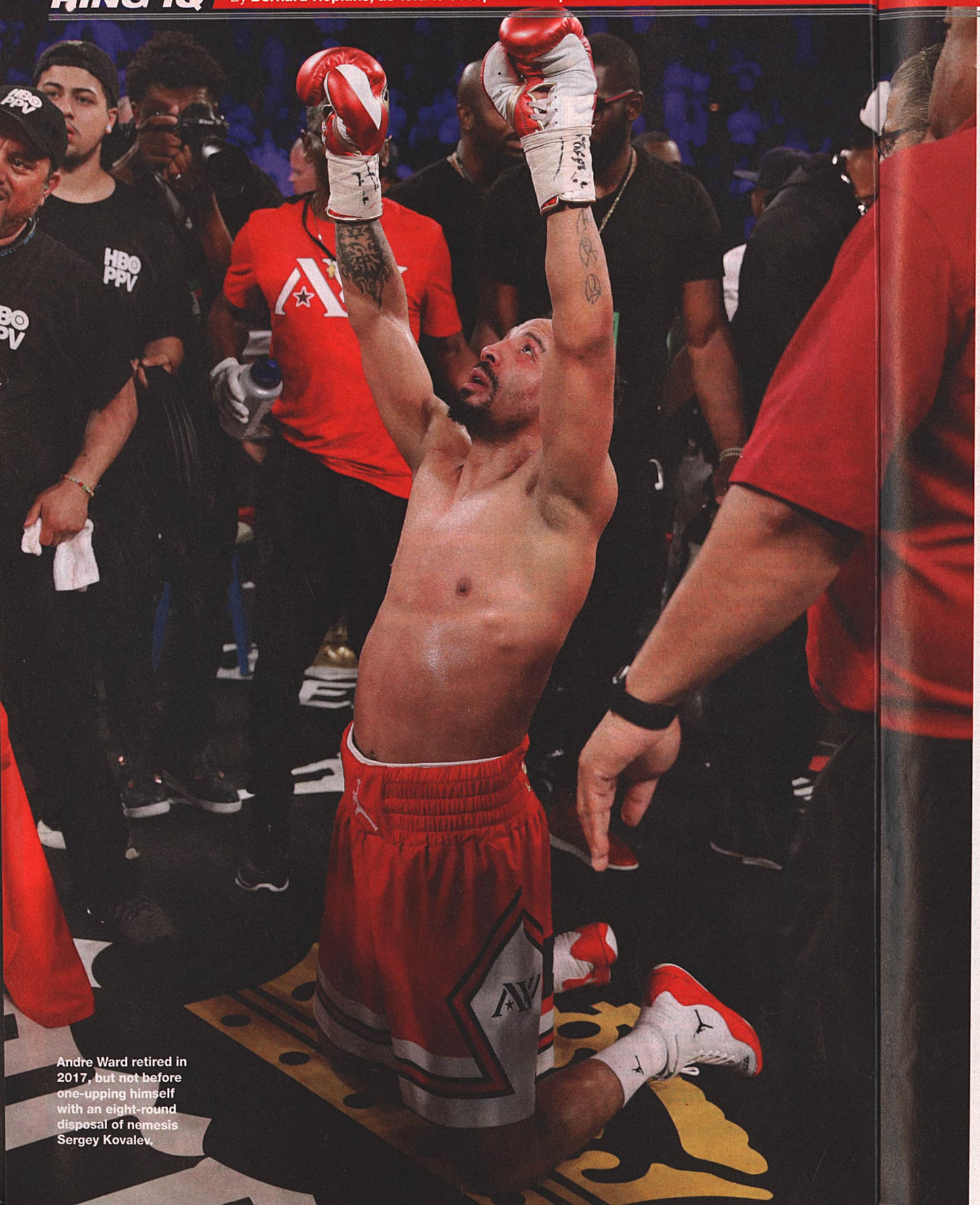
Prediction: JOSHUA

MEDIA:

ANSON WAINWRIGHT
RING contributor

Joshua is ticking all the boxes. Like everyone else, I became a believer after the Klitschko fight because he proved that he could come through a rough patch. He's got good size, good fundamentals, solid punching-power and he's in tremendous shape. Those attributes make Joshua a tough opponent for anyone. Wilder is a born puncher, but he's a big guy, so when he boxed against Stiverne (in the first fight), we saw a different side of him. Having (former two-time welterweight titleholder) Mark Breland as trainer will be a big help, because he's teaching him how to jab and use his length. The question marks surrounding Wilder are his chin and the quality of his opposition. Other than Stiverne, he hasn't been in against another top heavyweight. We need to see what happens when he gets hit, and he just hasn't had the acid test. Even though he won Olympic bronze and he's got the perfect record, we really don't know how he'll respond. Anyone Wilder hits, it could be over, and maybe he does catch Joshua. I just think he'd look to counter, and even though Joshua might have to survive a rough patch, I see him getting to Wilder by the middle rounds.

Prediction: JOSHUA



Andre Ward retired in 2017, but not before one-upping himself with an eight-round disposal of nemesis Sergey Kovalev.

BOXING MADE A COMEBACK IN 2017

AND 2018 LOOKS LIKE IT MIGHT BE EVEN BETTER

This is one in a series of columns from all-time great Bernard Hopkins as told to Joseph Santoliquito about ring tactics, what's currently going on in boxing and what all fighters should know in and out of the ring.

If I had to rate the year of 2017, between 1 and 10, I would say boxing made a comeback and I would rate 2017 as an 8. I base that on the big fights that took place this year: Andre Ward fighting Sergey Kovalev in their rematch, and another huge fight that people were waiting to see happen – and despite what some people thought, they didn't have to wait long to see Canelo Alvarez fight Gennady Golovkin.

Earlier this year, you saw Vasyl Lomachenko fight two times (with a third scheduled for December) and climb up the pound-for-pound list. You can call 2017 the coming-out party in the United States for Anthony Joshua, who got more attention in this country than he ever did before; certainly more in 2017 than he did in previous years. The world saw a great fight between Joshua and Wladimir Klitschko before 90,000 people in England. People that didn't know anything about boxing were asking who Joshua was.

The heavyweight division now has a pulse, and people can't wait to see Deontay Wilder fight Joshua, and it was the year both of them had in 2017 that will make it possible. The heavyweight division needs a unification fight.

Boxing is like a puzzle of the human body. We pieced a lot of that together in 2017. You must have the head, the arms, the body, then the legs and the feet – everything else is an accessory. The guys at the bottom – the little divisions like junior welterweight, welterweight, lightweight and junior lightweight – have been supplying the foundation.

Give credit to Ward and Kovalev, Joshua and Klitschko, and GGG and Canelo for making those fights. Boxing right now is heading in the right direction, and I say that because there are now sponsors coming in wanting to run their commercials around big fights, and the fans this year are getting good fights on ESPN through both Golden Boy and Top Rank.

That played a big part in 2017. We saw fights that made sense. Sponsors want to find and jump on the next superstar athlete before he blows up. How many times at the end of the year have we asked ourselves if the next year is going to get better for the sport? For many years the answer was no. But it is going to get better next year, because we needed 2017 to pull ourselves up from a year when the sport took a big hit. Few cared at the end of 2015 and 2016, and with all of the sports you have on TV today, fans have choices.

I think 2017 brought a lot of fans back; I really do think that. I have no complaints. The only complaint I have about 2017 has nothing to do with the fighters, or the fights, or the promotions. My complaint about 2017 is that every judge, in a big fight or small fight, should get their eyes checked. I'm not joking. I'm really serious about this. We have a lot of older judges in the sport whose eyes are going, and I really mean that. They may have seen 10,000 fights. They're older and their eyes go.

But no complaints about the fights that were made. Look at two years ago. You had fights that didn't lead to any possibilities or build for further possibilities down the line to happen. I think 2017 produced those possibilities for even better fights in 2018. Right off the bat, you'll have the GGG-Canelo rematch, which I guarantee will be a far different fight than the first one. Hopefully, if the powers that handle Wilder and Joshua can get together and hammer something out, you'll have a huge heavyweight unification fight that the world wants to see in 2018.

Those fights can be made, should be made and, in the past, normally didn't get made. If you look at 2017, fighters that wanted the big money, that wanted to be on the pound-for-pound Top 10 list, they took risks. It's obviously a risk any time you put on the gloves. But guys in 2017 took those risks that went beyond being a world champion and made themselves global.

We saw major fights in 2017 – and one major spectacle that I refuse to call a fight – and we saw what happens when the best meet the best. No one loses. The fighters get paid, the fans get to see what they want and everyone is happy.

Rafael Garcia stood out even in the background.

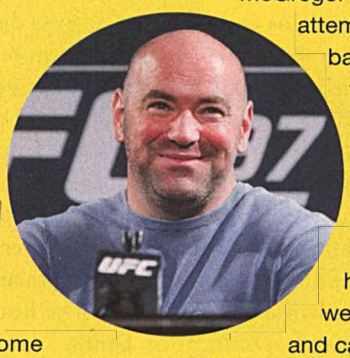
GOOD HANDS

Cutman and trainer Rafael Garcia died on Nov. 14 at the age of 88 as a result of leukemia. His wrapping skills were famously employed to guard the delicate hands of Floyd Mayweather Jr., but Garcia's life was about far more than "Money"; he worked with many other fighters, including Alexis Arguello, Roberto Duran and Wilfredo Gomez. Recognizable by his pin-bedazzled hat, Garcia was with Mayweather for most of his career and the two developed what those around the fighter said was a very close bond. On the day of Garcia's death, Mayweather tweeted "RIP Grand Dad. I will always love you."

Mikkel Kessler's comeback, scheduled for Nov. 11 in Denmark, was scuttled when the former titleholder contracted Lyme disease – probably the result of a tick bite. He's been out of the game since a unanimous-decision loss to **Carl Froch** in May 2013. Pretty humbling that a chiseled berserker like Kessler could be taken down by something as small as a tick. A lot smaller even, technically, since the infection comes from the bacteria in the tick's gut. In any case, Kessler will now return in March.

Just putting this here: **Adalaide Byrd** has been assigned as a judge on two fights since Canelo-Golovkin.

November was a month in which boxing and MMA continued to circle around each other like a pair of annoyed house cats. UFC President **Dana White** told the Los Angeles Times that he'll be getting a promoter's license and is "100 percent" gonna do the boxing thing. On The Jim Rome Podcast, White pointed out several ways in which the UFC treats its fighters better, including offering them health insurance and free grub at the organization's in-camp "restaurant." "We're the best," he said. When will boxing feel the love? "We're still working on it," White told the Times. "I've got to get my [stuff] together, but I'm getting into boxing, man."



Oscar De La Hoya says his [stuff] is already together and he's ready for a fight – his first since a loss to **Manny Pacquiao** in 2008. On the Golden Boy Radio show "Tattoo and the Crew," De La Hoya claimed he's been "secretly training" and then called out recent Mayweather dance partner **Conor McGregor,** promising, "Two rounds, that's all I need." We'll see how far this goes, but none of us will ever say "never" again.

And since McGregor is now such a part of boxing, seems like he's fair game even if this time it's an octagon he's making an ass of himself in. At the Bellator 187 event in Dublin, Ireland, on Nov. 10, a left hook from local middleweight **Charlie Ward** dropped **John Redmond** in the final seconds of the opening round. Then, as if conjured by three utterances of "Notorious," McGregor appeared in the cage at a full run and dove into a celebratory embrace with his teammate – who by his reckoning had just won the fight by knockout. Referee **Marc Goddard**, however, had stopped the round, not the fight, and put himself between McGregor and Ward in an attempt to get things back on course toward Round 2. McGregor, as he later put it in his online apology, let his emotions get the better of him. Some people were more blunt and called the resulting altercation between McGregor and Goddard an attack worthy of punishment. A least one writer said McGregor should've been jailed. Maybe we'll see how much Conor really learned from Floyd.

Quote of the month (from promoter **Eddie Hearn** to IFL TV, when asked to confirm **Deontay Wilder's** demand for $7 million to face **Anthony Joshua**): "Yeah, but … I mean, I want an 11-inch penis. It's not going to happen."

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Pictured left to right: Damon Allen Jr., Jessie Vargas, Fernando Vargas

FIGHTER OF THE MONTH

JERMELL CHARLO

By **Brian Harty**

Jermell Charlo would probably appreciate it if, just once, an article could be written about him without mentioning the "T" word or the person to whom the "T" word refers. Not because of any animosity, but just that everyone at some point wants to distinguish themselves from the herd – or the pair.

On Oct. 14 in Brooklyn, Charlo did both.

His fight against Erickson Lubin was part of a junior middleweight-themed card staged by Showtime, scheduled between a passing-of-the-torch meeting between Jarrett Hurd and Austin Trout and a main event/"walkout bout" featuring Erislandy Lara against Terrell Gausha.

Many thought this could be the fight of the

Jermell Charlo needed less than three minutes to solidify his standing as a top 154-pounder.

night, matching the undefeated Charlo, who was somewhat inconsistent during his climb up the 154-pound rankings but recently had discovered a mean streak in his fists, against the undefeated Lubin, an outstanding talent whose greatest liability was his lack of experience at only 22 years old. The athletic Charlo was favored, but it was a high-stakes collision between two men earmarked for stardom.

The gulf in experience was huge, though. Charlo had 29 pro fights under his WBC belt, many of them against quality opponents, while Lubin was in his 19th pro fight, his first title fight and only his sixth beyond an eight-rounder. Still, there was such faith in his all-around skills and aggressive style that an upset was deemed highly plausible.

And then the bell rang. Sucks for you if you chose that moment to go make a margarita.

Charlo didn't waste a breath, much less a punch. The round was half over before he did anything resembling offense; mostly he just waited and scoped Lubin out. That ended with about 30 seconds to go, when Charlo threw a double jab that made Lubin dip a little too much for his own good, putting his chin in a convenient spot to get tagged by a ridiculously short, scooping right hand. Lubin immediately did what in other circumstances would've been a pretty good James Brown impression, dropping into a hurdler's position right on the "hit me!" cue. The damage was no joke, though, and referee Harvey Dock didn't bother finishing the count.

Lara kept his spot at the top of the ratings after his forgettable win over Gausha and Hurd advanced after taking care of his own business with Trout, so Showtime had a nice little tournament on its hands by the end of the night.

The man plagued by comparisons his entire life was on another level, though. Charlo had singled himself out as the man to beat. RING

POUND FOR POUND: No change.

HEAVYWEIGHTS: No change.

CRUISERWEIGHTS: Krzysztof Wlodarczyk fell off the list from No. 8 after getting knocked out by Murat Gassiev (No. 2), which created room at No. 10 for South Africa's Kevin Lerena.

LIGHT HEAVYWEIGHTS: Trent Broadhurst's first fight beyond the border of Australia didn't go so well, as he was KO'd by Dmitry Bivol in the first round. Bivol (No. 7 last month) became the WBA titleholder and stepped up to No. 6; Broadhurst remained unrated.

SUPER MIDDLEWEIGHTS: Veteran Juergen Braehmer returned to the list at No. 9 with a solid unanimous decision over previously undefeated Rob Brant (unrated). Jesse Hart (No. 10 last month) was squeezed out as a result.

MIDDLEWEIGHTS: Ryota Murata claimed the honor of being the first man to stop Hassan N'Dam and climbed from No. 8 to No. 5 while N'Dam fell from No. 7 to No. 10. Daniel Jacobs then held his spot at No. 2 with a workmanlike decision over then-No. 9 Luis Arias, who dropped out and created room for recent 154-pounder Demetrius Andrade at No. 10.

JUNIOR MIDDLEWEIGHTS: A Barclays Center card involving half of the division's rated fighters shook up the list a bit. The main casualty was Erickson Lubin, who lost his spot at No. 8 along with his perfect record after getting torched by Jermell Charlo (No. 2) in the first round. Jarrett Hurd (No. 6 last month) rose a spot after scoring a 10th-round stoppage of Austin Trout, who dropped from No. 5 to No. 8, and Erislandy Lara (No. 1) held his rank after widely outpointing Terrell Gausha (unrated). With Lubin's departure creating a vacancy, undefeated Pole Maciej Sulecki entered at No. 10. Andrade (No. 4 last month) then moved up to 160, so everyone below him moved up a notch and Philly's own Julian Williams arrived at No. 10.

WELTERWEIGHTS: No change.

JUNIOR WELTERWEIGHTS: Adrian Granados (No. 5 last month) has been fighting at 147, most recently in a loss to Shawn Porter, so he was removed. Undefeated Californian Jose Ramirez took the opening at No. 10 after fighters moved up to fill the gap. Josh Taylor (No. 10 last month) gained an extra notch on the strength of a ninth-round knockout of Miguel Vazquez (unrated).

LIGHTWEIGHTS: No change.

JUNIOR LIGHTWEIGHTS: Jezreel Corrales (No. 3 last month) lost his title on the scale and then got knocked out in five rounds by then-unrated Alberto Machado from Puerto Rico. Corrales tumbled to No. 8 while Machado and his new belt moved in at No. 5, thus pushing out No. 10 Eduardo Hernandez.

FEATHERWEIGHTS: No change.

JUNIOR FEATHERWEIGHTS: No change.

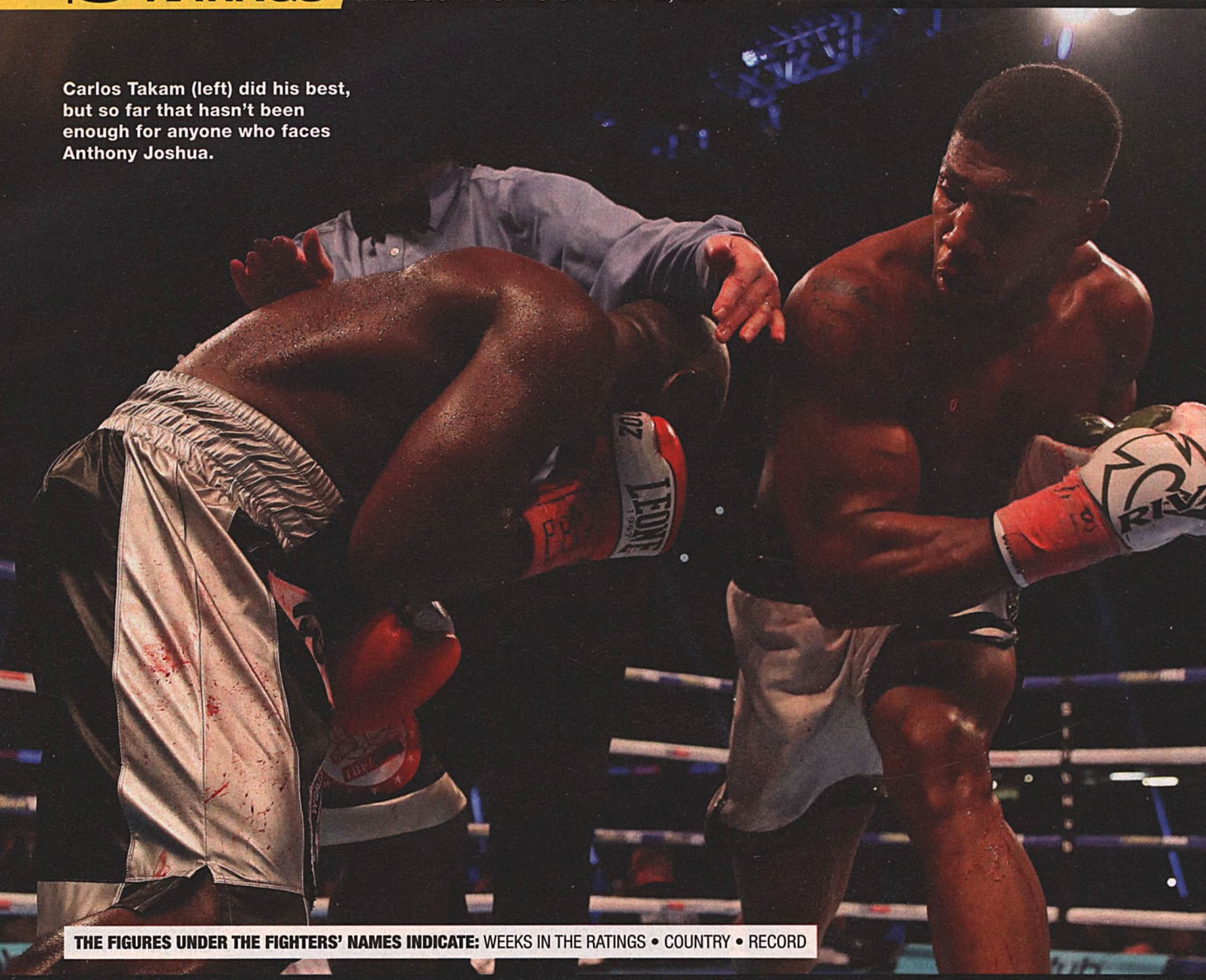
BANTAMWEIGHTS: Ryan Burnett (No. 5 last month) doubled his belt collection by taking one from Zhanat Zhakiyanov (No. 3 last month) by unanimous decision; they swapped places on the list. A reshuffle in the division also moved Zolani Tete to No. 1 over Jamie McDonnell and dropped Juan Carlos Payano from No. 2 to No. 4.

JUNIOR BANTAMWEIGHTS: No change.

FLYWEIGHTS: Moruti Mthalane (No. 6 last month) stopped unrated Ardin Diale in the second round and climbed to No. 5.

JUNIOR FLYWEIGHTS: Felix Alvarado entered the list at No. 9 with a third-round knockout of Fahlan Sakkreerin (unrated), with previous No. 9 Randy Petalcorin chosen as the man to exit to make room. The following week, Ken Shiro (No. 6 last month) rose to No. 2 after defending his title with a majority decision over Pedro Guevara, who dropped from No. 2 to No. 6.

STRAWWEIGHTS: No change.



Carlos Takam (left) did his best, but so far that hasn't been enough for anyone who faces Anthony Joshua.

THE FIGURES UNDER THE FIGHTERS' NAMES INDICATE: WEEKS IN THE RATINGS • COUNTRY • RECORD

HEAVYWEIGHTS
WEIGHT UNLIMITED

C TYSON FURY
300 • U.K. • 25-0-0 (18 KOs)

1. **ANTHONY JOSHUA**
107 • U.K. • 20-0-0 (20 KOs)
2. **DEONTAY WILDER**
208 • U.S. • 39-0-0 (38 KOs)
3. **KUBRAT PULEV**
318 • Bulgaria • 25-1-0 (13 KOs)
4. **JOSEPH PARKER**
84 • New Zealand • 24-0-0 (18 KOs)
5. **ALEXANDER POVETKIN**
20 • Russia • 32-1-0 (23 KOs)
6. **ANDY RUIZ JR.**
76 • Mexico • 29-1-0 (19 KOs)
7. **DILLIAN WHYTE**
48 • U.K. • 22-1-0 (16 KOs)
8. **DOMINIC BREAZEALE**
38 • U.S. • 19-1-0 (17 KOs)
9. **JARRELL MILLER**
15 • U.S. • 20-0-1 (18 KOS)
10. **TONY BELLEW**
7 • U.K. • 29-2-1 (19 KOs)

CRUISERWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 200 LBS

C (VACANT)

1. **OLEKSANDR USYK**
111 • Ukraine • 13-0-0 (11 KOs)
2. **MURAT GASSIEV**
53 • Russia • 25-0-0 (18 KOs)
3. **MAIRIS BRIEDIS**
90 • Latvia • 23-0-0 (18 KOs)
4. **DENIS LEBEDEV**
407 • Russia • 30-2-0 (22 KOs)
5. **YUNIER DORTICOS**
10 • Cuba • 22-0-0 (21 KOs)
6. **KRZYSZTOF GLOWACKI**
118 • Poland • 28-1-0 (18 KOs)
7. **ILUNGA MAKABU**
227 • Congo • 21-2-0 (20 KOs)
8. **ANDREW TABITI**
8 • U.S. • 15-0-0 (12 KOs)
9. **MAKSIM VLASOV**
7 • Russia • 40-2-0 (23 KOs)
10. **KEVIN LERENA**
4 • S. Africa • 19-1-0 (9 KOs)

LIGHT HEAVYWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 175 LBS

C (VACANT)

1. **ADONIS STEVENSON**
232 • Canada • 29-1-0 (24 KOs)
2. **SERGEY KOVALEV**
252 • Russia • 31-2-1 (27 KOs)
3. **ELEIDER ALVAREZ**
192 • Colombia • 23-0-0 (11 KOs)
4. **OLEKSANDR GVOZDYK**
52 • Ukraine • 14-0-0 (12 KOs)
5. **ARTUR BETERBIEV**
153 • Russia • 12-0-0 (12 KOs)
6. **DMITRY BIVOL**
22 • Russia • 12-0-0 (10 KOs)
7. **SULLIVAN BARRERA**
48 • Cuba • 21-1 (14 KOs)
8. **BADOU JACK**
12 • Sweden • 22-1-2 (13 KOs)
9. **MARCUS BROWNE**
39 • U.S. • 20-0-0 (15 KOs)
10. **JOE SMITH JR.**
74 • U.S. • 23-2-0 (19 KOs)

SUPER MIDDLEWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 168 LBS

C (VACANT)

1. **JAMES DEGALE**
232 • U.K. • 23-1-1 (14 KOs)
2. **GILBERTO RAMIREZ**
175 • Mexico • 36-0-0 (24 KOs)
3. **GEORGE GROVES**
310 • U.K. • 27-3-0 (20 KOs)
4. **CALLUM SMITH**
128 • U.K. • 23-0-0 (17 KOs)
5. **CHRIS EUBANK JR.**
18 • U.K. • 26-1-0 (20 KOs)
6. **ANDRE DIRRELL**
168 • U.S. • 26-2-0 (16 KOs)
7. **ANTHONY DIRRELL**
170 • U.S. • 30-1-1 (24 KOs)
8. **DAVID BENAVIDEZ**
26 • U.S. • 19-0-0 (17 KOs)
9. **JUERGEN BRAEHMER**
3 • Germany • 49-3-0 (35 KOs)
10. **TYRON ZEUGE**
53 • Germany • 21-0-1 (11 KOs)

MIDDLEWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 160 LBS

C CANELO ALVAREZ
104 • Mexico • 49-1-2 (34 KOs)

1. GENNADY GOLOVKIN
310 • Kaz. • 37-0-1 (33 KOs)

2. DANIEL JACOBS
153 • U.S. • 33-2-0 (29 KOs)

3. DAVID LEMIEUX
129 • Canada • 38-3-0 (33 KOs)

4. BILLY JOE SAUNDERS
155 • U.K. • 25-0-0 (12 KOs)

5. SERGIY DEREVYANCHENKO
32 • Ukraine • 11-0-0 (9 KOs)

6. RYOTA MURATA
46 • Japan • 13-1-0 (10 KOs)

7. ANDY LEE
153 • Ireland • 35-3-1 (24 KOs)

8. JERMALL CHARLO
16 • U.S. • 26-0-0 (20 KOs)

9. HASSAN N'DAM
200 • Cameroon • 36-3-0 (21 KOs)

10. DEMETRIUS ANDRADE
1 • U.S. • 25-0-0 (16 KOs)

JR. MIDDLEWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 154 LBS

C (VACANT)

1. ERISLANDY LARA
333 • Cuba • 25-2-2 (14 KOs)

2. JERMELL CHARLO
210 • U.S. • 30-0-0 (15 KOs)

3. MIGUEL COTTO
104 • P.R. • 41-5-0 (33 KOs)

4. JARRETT HURD
53 • U.S. • 21-0-0 (15 KOs)

5. BRIAN CASTANO
20 • Argentina • 14-0-0 (10 KOs)

6. LIAM SMITH
114 • U.K. • 26-1-1 (14 KOs)

7. AUSTIN TROUT
284 • U.S. • 30-4-0 (17 KOs)

8. MICHEL SORO
48 • France • 30-2-1 (20 KOs)

9. MACIEJ SULECKI
5 • Poland • 26-0-0 (10 KOs)

10. JULIAN WILLIAMS
4 • U.S. • 23-1-1 (15 KOs)

WELTERWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 147 LBS

C (VACANT)

1. KEITH THURMAN
245 • U.S. • 28-0-0 (22 KOs)

2. ERROL SPENCE
111 • U.S. • 22-0-0 (19 KOs)

3. SHAWN PORTER
206 • U.S. • 28-2-1 (17 KOs)

4. KELL BROOK
343 • U.K. • 36-2-0 (25 KOs)

5. DANNY GARCIA
120 • U.S. • 33-1-0 (19 KOs)

6. LAMONT PETERSON
39 • U.S. • 35-3-1 (17 KOs)

7. LUCAS MATTHYSSE
24 • Argentina • 38-4-0 (35 KOs)

8. JEFF HORN
20 • Australia • 17-0-1 (11 KOs)

9. MANNY PACQUIAO
54 • Phil. • 59-7-2 (38 KOs)

10. JESSIE VARGAS
89 • U.S. • 27-2-0 (10 KOs)

JR. WELTERWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 140 LBS

C TERENCE CRAWFORD
135 • U.S. • 32-0-0 (23 KOs)

1. MIKEY GARCIA
16 • U.S. • 37-0-0 (30 KOs)

2. VIKTOR POSTOL
222 • Ukraine • 29-1-0 (12 KOs)

3. ANTONIO OROZCO
111 • U.S. • 26-0-0 (17 KOs)

4. REGIS PROGRAIS
69 • U.S. • 20-0-0 (17 KOs)

5. JULIUS INDONGO
50 • Namibia • 22-1-0 (11 KOs)

6. EDUARD TROYANOVSKY
103 • Russia • 26-1-0 (23 KOs)

7. SERGEY LIPINETS
49 • Russia • 13-0-0 (10 KOs)

8. JOSH TAYLOR
19 • U.K. • 11-0-0 (10 KOs)

9. RANCES BARTHELEMY
26 • Cuba • 26-0-0 (13 KOs)

10. JOSE RAMIREZ
1 • U.S. • 21-0-0 (16 KOs)

LIGHTWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 135 LBS

C JORGE LINARES
193 • Venezuela • 43-3-0 (27 KOs)

1. MIKEY GARCIA
42 • U.S. • 37-0-0 (30 KOs)

2. TERRY FLANAGAN
110 • U.K. • 33-0-0 (13 KOs)

3. ROBERT EASTER
85 • U.S. • 20-0-0 (14 KOs)

4. DENIS SHAFIKOV
136 • Russia • 38-3-1 (20 KOs)

5. RAYMUNDO BELTRAN
32 • Mexico • 34-7-1 (21 KOs)

6. RICHARD COMMEY
129 • Ghana • 25-2-0 (22 KOs)

7. ANTHONY CROLLA
108 • U.K. • 32-6-3 (13 KOs)

8. FELIX VERDEJO
83 • Puerto Rico • 23-0-0 (15 KOs)

9. LUKE CAMPBELL
8 • U.K. • 17-2-0 (14 KOs)

10. DEJAN ZLATICANIN
6 • Montenegro • 22-1-0 (15 KOs)

JR. LIGHTWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 130 LBS

C (VACANT)

1. VASYL LOMACHENKO
75 • Ukraine • 9-1-0 (7 KOs)

2. MIGUEL BERCHELT
42 • Mexico • 32-1-0 (28 KOs)

3. ORLANDO SALIDO
165 • Mexico • 44-13-4 (31 KOs)

4. GERVONTA DAVIS
44 • U.S. • 19-0-0 (18 KOs)

5. ALBERTO MACHADO
4 • P.R. • 19-0-0 (16 KOs)

6. FRANCISCO VARGAS
175 • Mexico • 23-1-2 (17 KOs)

7. TEVIN FARMER
32 • U.S. • 25-4-1 (5 KOs)

8. JEZREEL CORRALES
81 • Panama • 22-2-0 (8 KOs)

9. JHONNY GONZALEZ
17 • Mexico • 65-10-0 (54 KOs)

10. EDNER CHERRY
16 • U.S. • 36-7-2 (19 KOs)

FEATHERWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 126 LBS

C (VACANT)

1. LEO SANTA CRUZ
116 • U.S. • 34-1-1 (19 KOs)

2. GARY RUSSELL JR.
138 • U.S. • 28-1-0 (17 KOs)

3. CARL FRAMPTON
68 • U.K. • 23-1-0 (14 KOs)

4. LEE SELBY
192 • U.K. • 25-1-0 (9 KOs)

5. ABNER MARES
237 • Mexico • 31-2-1 (15 KOs)

6. OSCAR VALDEZ
84 • Mexico • 23-0-0 (19 KOs)

7. JOSEPH DIAZ JR.
86 • U.S. • 25-0-0 (13 KOs)

8. JESUS CUELLAR
163 • Argentina • 28-2-0 (21 KOs)

9. SCOTT QUIGG
12 • U.K. • 34-1-2 (25 KOs)

10. JESUS ROJAS
9 • P.R. • 26-1-2 (19 KOs)

JR. FEATHERWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 122 LBS

C (VACANT)

1. GUILLERMO RIGONDEAUX
367 • Cuba • 17-0-0 (11 KOs)

2. JESSIE MAGDALENO
127 • U.S. • 25-0-0 (18 KOs)

3. REY VARGAS
153 • Mexico • 30-0-0 (22 KOs)

4. DIEGO DE LA HOYA
68 • Mexico • 20-0-0 (9 KOs)

5. MOISES FLORES
71 • Mexico • 25-0-0 (17 KOs)

6. HUGO RUIZ
49 • Mexico • 36-4-0 (32 KOs)

7. DANIEL ROMAN
9 • U.S. • 23-2-1 (9 KOs)

8. RYOSUKE IWASA
9 • Japan • 24-2-0 (16 KOs)

9. JULIO CEJA
25 • Mexico • 31-2-0 (28 KOs)

10. CESAR JUAREZ
8 • Mexico • 20-5-0 (15 KOs)

HOW OUR RATINGS ARE COMPILED

Championship vacancies can be filled in the following two ways: 1. THE RING's Nos. 1 and 2 contenders fight one another. 2. If the Nos. 1 and 2 contenders choose not to fight one another and No. 1 fights No. 3, that matchup could be for the RING title if the Editorial Board deems No. 3 worthy.

A champion can lose his belt in six situations: 1. The Champion loses a fight in the weight class in which he is champion; 2. The Champion moves to another weight class; 3. The Champion does not schedule a fight in any weight class for 18 months, although injuries and certain other unforeseen circumstances could be taken into consideration; 4. The Champion does not schedule a fight at his championship weight for 18 months (even if he fights at another weight); 5. The Champion does not schedule a fight with a Top-5 contender from any weight class for two years; 6. The Champion retires.

THE RING Editorial Board considers input from the Ratings Panel of boxing journalists from around the world and then decides collectively what changes will be made. That applies to both the pound-for-pound and divisional ratings.

Records provided by boxrec.com

BANTAMWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 118 LBS

C SHINSUKE YAMANAKA
315 • Japan • 27-1-2 (19 KOs)

1. ZOLANI TETE
88 • S. Africa • 25-3-0 (20 KOs)

2. JAMIE MCDONNELL
237 • U.K. • 29-2-1 (13 KOs)

3. RYAN BURNETT
23 • U.K. • 18-0-0 (9 KOs)

4. JUAN CARLOS PAYANO
164 • Dom. Rep. • 19-1-0 (9 KOs)

5. ZHANAT ZHAKIYANOV
40 • Kaz. • 27-2-0 (18 KOs)

6. LIBORIO SOLIS
36 • Venezuela • 25-5-1 (11 KOs)

7. LEE HASKINS
127 • U.K. • 34-4-0 (14 KOs)

8. EMMANUEL RODRIGUEZ
30 • P.R. • 17-0-0 (12 KOs)

9. OSCAR NEGRETE
16 • Colombia • 17-0-0 (7 KOs)

10. PAUL BUTLER
7 • U.K. • 25-1-0 (13 KOs)

JR. BANTAMWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 115 LBS

C (VACANT)

1. NAOYA INOUE
150 • Japan • 14-0-0 (12 KOs)

2. WISAKSIL WANGEK
237 • Thailand • 44-4-1 (40 KOs)

3. JUAN FRANCISCO ESTRADA
58 • Mexico • 36-2-0 (25 KOs)

4. CARLOS CUADRAS
286 • Mexico • 36-2-1 (27 KOs)

5. KHALID YAFAI
88 • U.K. • 23-0-0 (14 KOs)

6. JERWIN ANCAJAS
64 • Phil. • 27-1-1 (18 KOs)

7. RAU'SHEE WARREN
16 • U.S. • 15-2-0 (4 KOs)

8. ROMAN GONZALEZ
62 • Nicaragua • 46-2-0 (38 KOs)

9. JONAS SULTAN
9 • Phil. • 14-3-0 (9 KOs)

10. REX TSO
6 • China • 22-0-0 (13 KOs)

FLYWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 112 LBS

C (VACANT)

1. KAZUTO IOKA
166 • Japan • 22-1-0 (13 KOs)

2. DONNIE NIETES
60 • Phil. • 40-1-4 (22 KOs)

3. DAIGO HIGA
59 • Japan • 14-0-0 (14 KOs)

4. JUAN CARLOS REVECO
320 • Argentina • 39-3-0 (19 KOs)

5. MORUTI MTHALANE
29 • S. Africa • 35-2-0 (24 KOs)

6. VINCENT LEGRAND
40 • France • 25-0-0 (15 KOs)

7. ANDREW SELBY
24 • U.K. • 10-0-0 (5 KOs)

8. FRANCISCO RODRIGUEZ JR.
22 • Mexico • 24-4-1 (16 KOs)

9. MASAYUKI KURODA
17 • Japan • 28-7-3 (16 KOs)

10. SHO KIMURA
16 • Japan • 15-1-2 (8 KOs)

JR. FLYWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 108 LBS

C (VACANT)

1. KOSEI TANAKA
46 • Japan • 10-0-0 (6 KOs)

2. RYOICHI TAGUCHI
153 • Japan • 26-2-2 (12 KOs)

3. MILAN MELINDO
157 • Phil. • 37-2-0 (13 KOs)

4. KEN SHIRO
51 • Japan • 11-0-0 (5 KOs)

5. CARLOS CANIZALES
45 • Venezuela • 19-0-1 (16 KOs)

6. PEDRO GUEVARA
242 • Mexico • 30-3-1 (17 KOs)

7. GANIGAN LOPEZ
89 • Mexico • 28-7-0 (17 KOs)

8. HEKKIE BUDLER
56 • S. Africa • 31-3-0 (10 KOs)

9. FELIX ALVARADO
4 • Nicaragua • 30-2-0 (26 KOs)

10. AKIRA YAEGASHI
98 • Japan • 25-6-0 (13 KOs)

STRAWWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 105 LBS

C (VACANT)

1. CHAYAPHON MOONSRI
335 • Thailand • 48-0-0 (17 KOs)

2. THAMMANOON NIYOMTRONG
163 • Thailand • 16-0-0 (7 KOs)

3. BYRON ROJAS
87 • Nicaragua • 21-3-3 (9 KOs)

4. HIROTO KYOGUCHI
31 • Japan • 8-0-0 (6 KOs)

5. JOSE ARGUMEDO
98 • Mexico • 20-4-1 (12 KOs)

6. CARLOS BUITRAGO
266 • Nicaragua • 30-2-1 (17 KOs)

7. RYUYA YAMANAKA
53 • Japan • 15-2-0 (4 KOs)

8. SIMPHIWE KHONCO
56 • S. Africa • 18-5-0 (7 KOs)

9. TATSUYA FUKUHARA
28 • Japan • 19-5-6 (7 KOs)

10. LEROY ESTRADA
25 • Panama • 16-2-0 (6 KOs)

POUND FOR POUND

1. GENNADY GOLOVKIN
144 • Kazakhstan • 37-0-1 (33 KOs)

2. TERENCE CRAWFORD
133 • U.S. • 32-0-0 (23 KOs)

3. VASYL LOMACHENKO
74 • Ukraine • 9-1-0 (7 KOs)

4. GUILLERMO RIGONDEAUX
221 • Cuba • 17-0-0 (11 KOs)

5. SERGEY KOVALEV
140 • Russia • 30-2-1 (26 KOs)

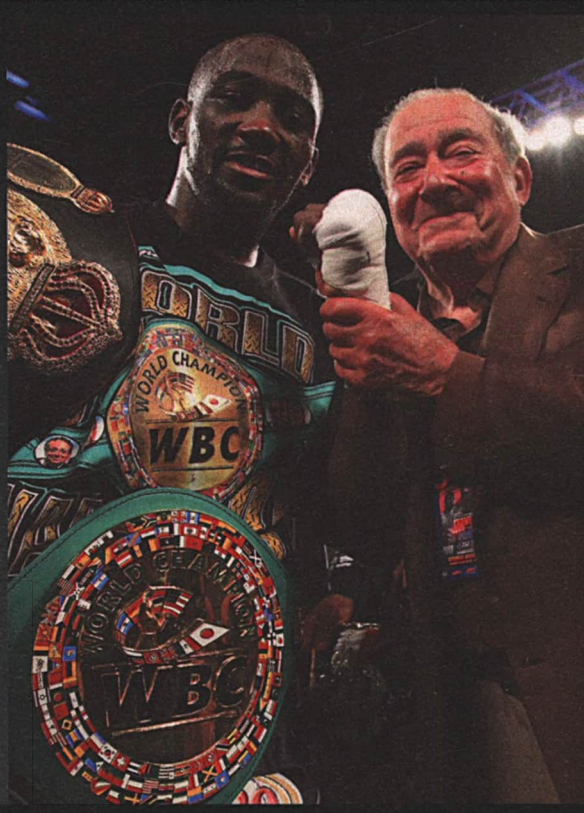
6. CANELO ALVAREZ
104 • Mexico • 49-1-2 (34 KOs)

7. MIKEY GARCIA
16 • U.S. • 37-0-0 (30 KOs)

8. NAOYA INOUE
13 • Japan • 14-0-0 (12 KOs)

9. ERROL SPENCE JR.
10 • U.S. • 22-0-0 (19 KOs)

10. WISAKSIL WANGEK
8 • Thailand • 44-4-1 (40 KOs)



THE RING POLICY ON RATED BOXERS WHO TEST POSITIVE FOR PERFORMANCE-ENHANCING DRUGS

THE RING will remove from its ratings any rated boxer — including a champion — if such boxer at some point undergoes drug testing (Olympic-style or otherwise) and that boxer tests positive for a performance-enhancing drug.

In the event that a boxer has undergone testing in which the boxer provides two samples ("A" and "B") and the boxer's "A" and subsequent "B" samples test positive for a performance-enhancing drug or if his "A" sample tests positive and he waives his right to have the "B" sample tested, then the boxer shall immediately be removed from the ratings.

A boxer whose "A" sample tested positive and is awaiting the results of his "B" sample will not be allowed to fight for a championship or rise in the ratings.

A boxer who is removed because of a positive test will have the opportunity to earn his way back into the ratings after any suspension period is completed.

A boxer who is dropped also may be reinstated if the testing agency subsequently reverses its decision or a court of competent jurisdiction finds that the test result was invalid.

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THE GREAT DEBATE

'POUND FOR POUND' MEANS DIFFERENT THINGS TO DIFFERENT PEOPLE. DOES ANY OF IT MATTER?

By **Doug Fischer**

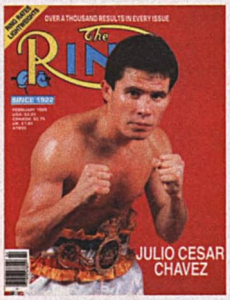
The pound-for-pound list is the only place Terence Crawford (left) and Gennady Golovkin will ever compete.

Who's No. 1? That question drives sports. It's the basis for competition. It's what athletes endeavor to answer, and the reason most fans watch and support standout teams and individuals.

In organized team sports the question of who's No. 1 is usually answered by the end of the season. In professional boxing that question can go unanswered for years due to business deals and industry politics.

On the rare occasions the question is answered, the fighter has usually proven to be No. 1 in his weight class. When Terence Crawford, already the RING champ at 140 pounds, unified all four major world titles by stopping Julius Indongo in three rounds in August, his accomplishment was celebrated within the boxing world. Crawford proved without a doubt that he was the best junior welterweight in the world.

But as seldom as undisputed champions are seen in this era, fights that determine the No. 1 boxer in the sport regardless of weight class are even rarer, which means the mythical pound-for-pound title is often up for debate. The separation of opinion –

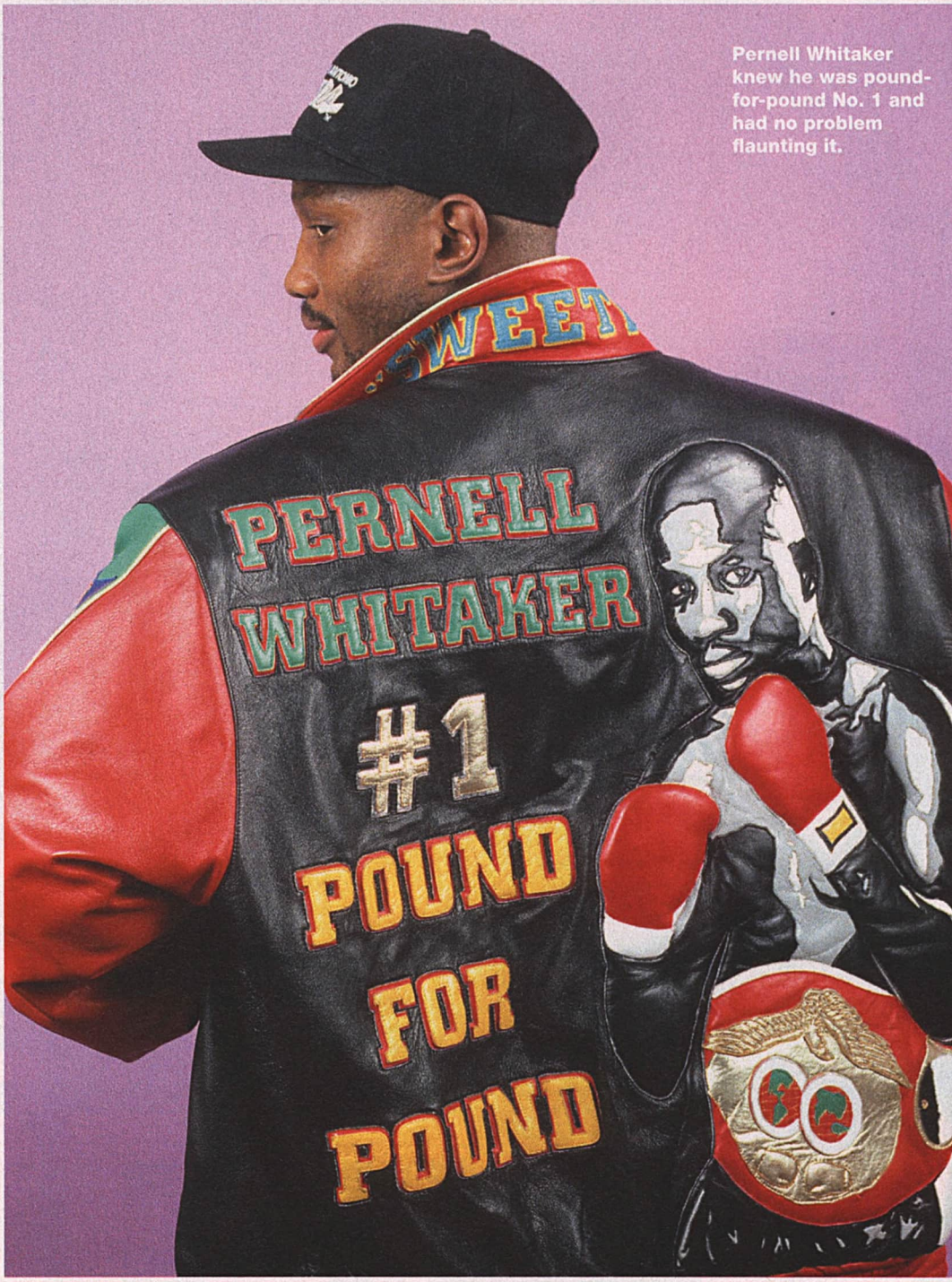


Here's what some of our RingTV Facebook followers had to say when asked if pound-for-pound lists matter to them:

Hardcores and casuals certainly pay attention to P4P lists because it gives a snapshot of the state of the game. With so many champions today, we need a synthesis of who's who, which P4P lists do. Keep them coming.
- Frank Jackson

★ ★ ★

I go based on overall skill level, what they have proven recently and a gut feeling of how I feel they are going to do moving forward.
- Chris Smith



Pernell Whitaker knew he was pound-for-pound No. 1 and had no problem flaunting it.

and the never-ending arguments it spawns – seems to suit boxing fans and journalists of the social media age.

The Boxing Writers Association of America voted Crawford, also a former lightweight champ who is about to invade the deep welterweight division, No. 1 pound-for-pound.

Long-reigning unified middleweight beltholder Gennady Golovkin tops the mythical rankings of THE RING and ESPN.com.

Those who favor Crawford point out that he's conquered two divisions and has never struggled in a fight as much as Golovkin did against Daniel Jacobs and Canelo Alvarez. Those in GGG's corner point out that Crawford's never faced an opponent as talented or accomplished as Jacobs and Alvarez.

Some fans and media outlets proclaim Vasyl Lomachenko, the ultra-talented amateur legend who won titles in two weight classes within seven pro bouts, to be No. 1. They

don't care that Lomachenko, No. 3 in THE RING's pound-for-pound rankings behind Golovkin and Crawford, only has 10 pro bouts overall. They're blown away by his skill and athleticism and can't envision the sport's other elite boxers beating the Ukrainian southpaw if weight wasn't a factor.

When debating the merits of Golovkin, Crawford and Lomachenko, there really is no wrong answer, which is probably one of the reasons the pound-for-pound concept is so popular and polarizing.

Max Kellerman, boxing analyst for HBO and one of the higher-profile sports broadcasters who embraces the mythical rankings, brought up the subject following light heavyweight standout Dmitry Bivol's one-punch first-round KO of Trent Broadhurst on Nov. 4.

He admitted that HBO's commentators are sometimes "derided" by the media, and by fans, for placing too much importance on a rankings system that has no set criteria.

"Fans and others say, 'Pound for pound? What does that really mean?'" Kellerman asked rhetorically.

"First of all, it's a lot of fun. This is entertainment, after all. It's the way people used to argue about who should be the national champs in college football. It's very subjective and opinion-based. And that's what 'pound for pound' is and it's become a pastime of boxing fans."

Younger fans tend to agree with Kellerman, but some of the older fans – those who followed the sport when pound-for-pound rankings weren't mentioned during boxing broadcasts – let out a collective groan when he brought up the term. Many of those fans long for the days when Larry Merchant was still HBO's boxing analyst.

However, the mythical rankings were bandied about during the second half of Merchant's 35-year tenure on the premium cable network – especially in the late 1990s when Pernell Whitaker, Roy Jones Jr. and Oscar De La Hoya all vied for the No. 1 spot – and the pound-for-pound title existed even prior to his newspaper sports columnist years in the '60s and '70s.

"Maybe it was in the '40s or '50s," Merchant told THE RING. "I don't know who individually came up with the idea, whether it was a good promoter, a PR guy or a writer, but I always understood it as related to how great Joe Louis was at the time. It was a way of shining a light on smaller fighters, and that was inspired by Sugar Ray Robinson, who was considered something of a genius at the time. There were others who resembled him but *weren't* him, so this was just a way of promoting the game, promoting the smaller guys who already had big followings."

Kathy Duva, CEO of Main Events, which promoted Whitaker, says being recognized the best boxer, pound for pound, remained an effective marketing tool for talented lighter-weight fighters during the '90s, when the heavyweight division commanded most of the mainstream media attention.

"I think Pernell helped bring the 'pound for pound' term out of mothballs," said Duva, who served as the publicist for Main Events when her late husband Dan Duva ran the New Jersey-based company. "THE RING magazine made a pound-for-pound championship belt for Whitaker after his fight with Julio Cesar Chavez in 1993. I had a 'pound for pound' jacket made for him to help spread the word.

"He called himself 'pound for pound.' So did boxing writers and HBO, and we embraced it. It evolved organically. We didn't plan it, but we accepted it because it was true, and we needed a way to describe his magnificence and to get the spotlight on him at a time when Evander Holyfield and Riddick Bowe were fighting on HBO.

"How do you explain to the average sports fan – which we're always trying to reach – a defensive stylist like Whitaker? How do you compare him with great heavyweights? 'Pound for pound' helped."

In this way, the mythical rankings go beyond fan debates and mental masturbation. They can have a tangible effect on the careers of overlooked standouts from the lighter-weight classes, such as Roman Gonzalez (see sidebar on page 36). Many boxing fans first learned about marvelous sub-bantamweight future hall of famers, such as Ricardo Lopez, Mark Johnson and Humberto Gonzalez, by reading their names in THE RING's pound-for-pound rankings or KO magazine's Dynamite Dozen.

It's also a way to better ascertain how special the elite boxers of the sport are.

What has the pound-for-pound concept evolved to? Why has it become such an obsession with fans and media? Should it resonate as much as it does?

THE RING editorial board posed these questions to boxing insiders and to the fans via social media. »

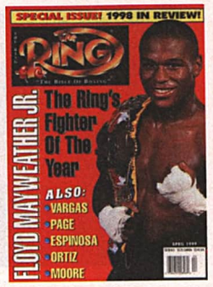
I follow them but don't put a lot of stock into the rankings. I am more interested in seeing 10 different people's takes on the subject than reading one cumulative list.
- Michael Greene

★ ★ ★

No. Just who creates an exciting fight.
- Hugh Richard Draper

★ ★ ★

I don't put much weight in P4P rankings, because they are put together by people who, frankly, don't know much about boxing.
- Doug Oakes



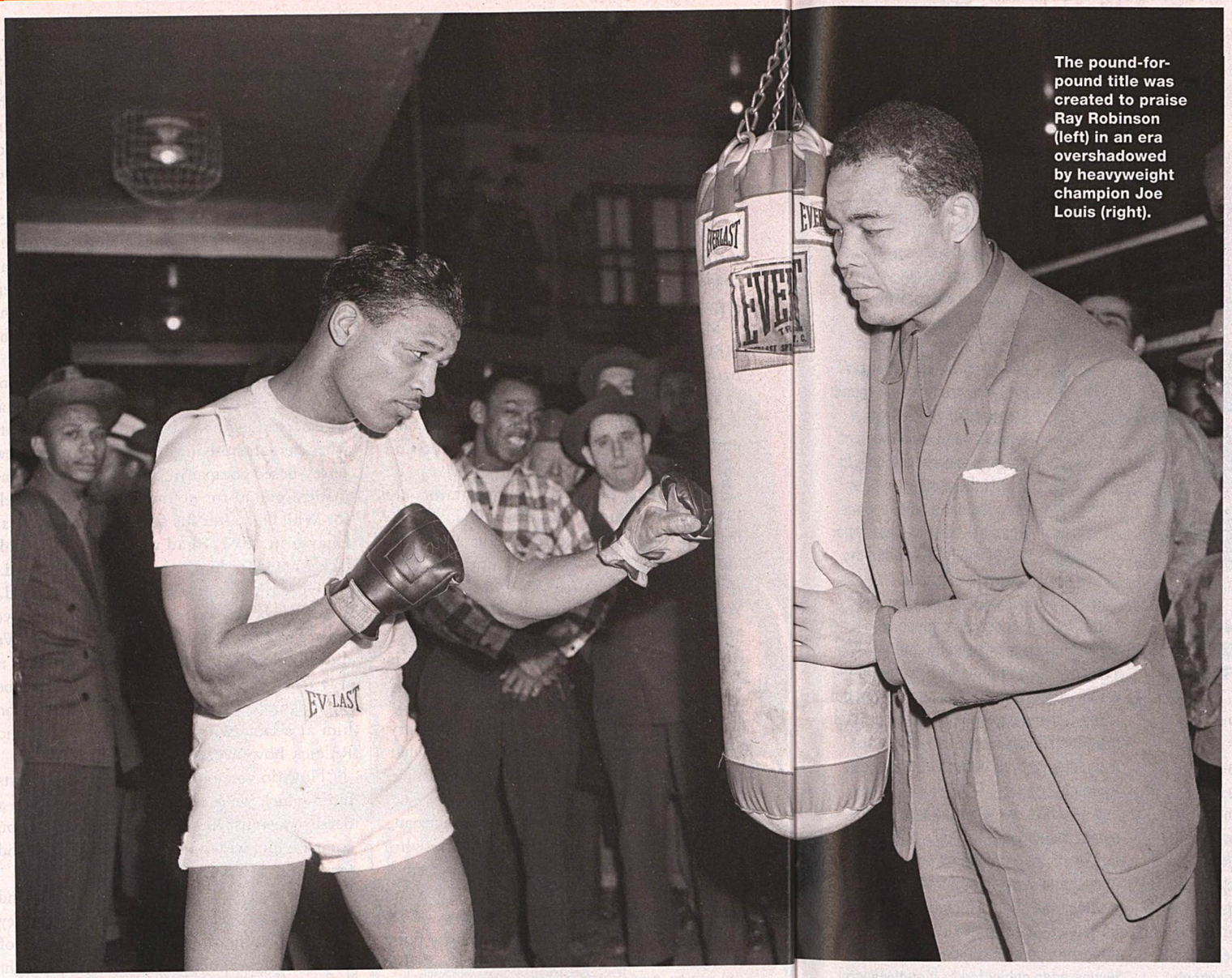
I definitely follow the P4P lists. What makes the top fighter in the P4P rankings? Quality of opposition (including wins over fellow P4P foes), dominance in current division, activity levels. What does not constitute consideration: hype (the Khan factor), promotional affiliations, noise levels, flash and cash (the Broner factor).
- Pául Wíckés

★ ★ ★

I don't pay attention to P4P lists at all. They're all just silly conjecture used to stir up conversation/ arguments.
- James Sayer

★ ★ ★

It gives fighters something to aim for beyond just being the champ of their division. It usually seems fairly accurate and I'm sure the boxers appreciate being recognized.
- Pete Edmonds



The pound-for-pound title was created to praise Ray Robinson (left) in an era overshadowed by heavyweight champion Joe Louis (right).

I don't pay attn 2 P4P lists, because they were created using the same kind of thinking that goes into Fantasy Sports teams. #dealwiththereal @_InwardLook_909 via Twitter

THOMAS HAUSER (Muhammad Ali's biographer and author of *There Will Always be Boxing*): "Pound for pound" was invented for Sugar Ray Robinson. In a long-ago era when the heavyweight championship of the world was the most coveted title in sports, (RING magazine founder) Nat Fleischer wanted to show how special Robinson was. Robinson clearly stood alone. But the pound-for-pound title has been debased since then. There's a follow-the-herd mentality among voters (many of whom aren't particularly well-informed). Fighters get a boost from appearing on HBO or Showtime. One inane ballot can skew the rankings. And too often, the lists reflect what a fighter did years ago as opposed to how good he is now.

LARRY MERCHANT (hall-of-fame broadcaster and former HBO commentator): It's sort of like a modern-day metric about the sport in the sense that if you're a careful observer of the game, metrics tell you what you really know, particularly about individual performers. And if you were a boxing fan, that had to be embedded in the popular culture at the time, because there were so many great smaller fighters who were big attractions in the '20s and '30s and then after World War II. So somebody was smart enough to come up with a great talking or arguing point about who is the best out there.

I mean, in the real world, any heavyweight could beat any featherweight, right? And so in boxing, where we have fighting divisions, "pound for pound" meant something. It was a way maybe originally to glorify a young Sugar Ray Robinson, who was fighting great fighters in his second year as a professional, and a way before the age of television of helping to promote certain fighters. That was my understanding of the evolution of the term.

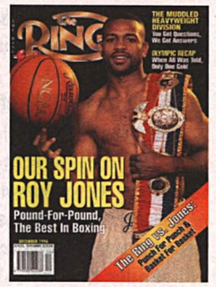
FRANK BARTOLINI (Wall Street Journal): There are some writers who like to believe that they're smart – in any sport or media ... The guys giving you the news think they're more important than the news, so they do these pound-for-pound lists like saying, 'I know, because I'm the expert, and you're the reader.' You know? But there's no argument to win with pound-for-pound. Where do you even start?

*Without any *truly* unified champs, your P4P lists are useful to compare across the dizzying constellation of boxing titling organizations. @MattLunkes via Twitter*

BERNARD HOPKINS (former middleweight and light heavyweight champion): I think the pound-for-pound list is an accurate assessment of fighters. I do have to say the credibility behind it goes into who the messenger of the pound-for-pound lists is. In my opinion, the individuals or media that does the list has to have credibility, like a RING Magazine or ESPN, before I give it any kind of credibility. It was always my goal to be No. 1 pound-for-pound. You know you're the best fighter in the world (if you have this status). I thought I should have been pound-for-pound No. 1 way before I was, but all world champions think that way.

RICKY HATTON (former junior welterweight champion and welterweight titleholder): You have to set yourself goals in your career. As a youngster, I dreamed of becoming a world champion and when I achieved that, I wanted to be the best in my weight class. You can win a world title but that doesn't necessarily mean you're the best in your division. I was able to unify (world titles) and I had the RING Magazine belt at 140 pounds.

After that, I wanted to do what some of my heroes had done and become a two-weight world champion, which I did when I won the WBA welterweight title. I'd headlined in America, my family was looked after and the next thing was to try and become the best fighter at any weight. You're not the champion you think you are if you get that opportunity and you don't take it. To say you're the best in the world at anything is great. But to say



What makes a fighter P4P in my book is a fighter that has never ducked anyone and beats the best.
- Jessy Garcha

★ ★ ★

Pound for pound is a joke of a list.
- Ubaldo Flores

★ ★ ★

It's just for fun.
- Steve Cuzz

★ ★ ★

They matter to me. I almost always agree with them. When I don't totally agree, I usually understand why they are as they are. To be best P4P you must have boxing skills, a win streak, have beaten the best in your division. ... I think it is good for boxing in general.
- Matt Morgan

★ ★ ★

I think we should put more focus on divisional lists, rather than the P4P where few or none of the boxers can actually fight each other.
- Dardel Mendones

you're the best boxer to draw breath on earth is something else.

KATHY DUVA (CEO of Main Events): The years that (Pernell) Whitaker reigned as the lightweight champ and later moved to welterweight took place at a time when we had the Four Kings of Heavyweight Boxing – Mike Tyson, Evander Holyfield, Riddick Bowe and Lennox Lewis. They were popular and dominant, and we had to find a way to make a lightweight stand out from them. "Pound for pound" helped.

We used it in the official title for the Whitaker-De La Hoya fight and almost 20 years later with the first Sergey Kovalev-Andre Ward fight. I wanted badly to play up the fact that the Ward-Kovalev rematch would determine the No. 1 boxer in the sport, but Roc Nation (Ward's promoter) would not allow it for some reason.

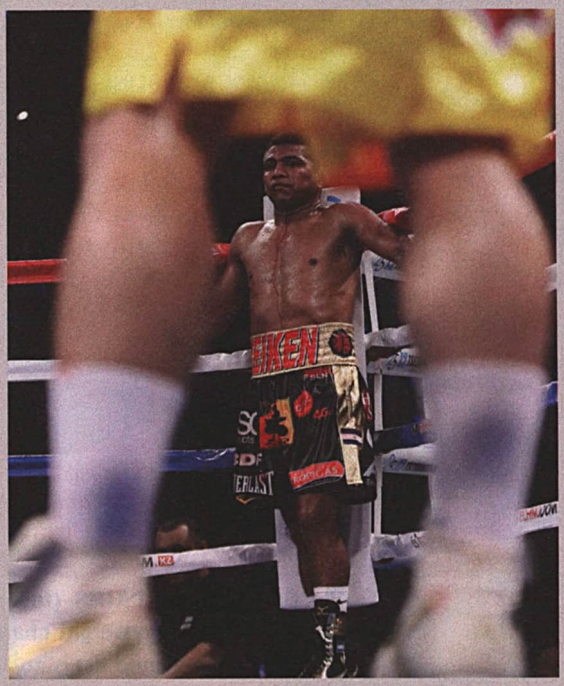
[Editor's Note: Duva has co-promoted three fights that determined THE RING's pound-for-pound No. 1 boxer – Whitaker vs. Chavez, Whitaker vs. De La Hoya and the Andre Ward-Sergey Kovalev rematch.]

P4P lists are popularity contests. They are based on much more than a boxer's skills in the ring. Meaningless in the big picture. … Also, most people have no idea of the actual meaning of POUND FOR POUND. They don't have a damn clue to be honest.
@Barcham2015 via Twitter

BARTOLINI: What I think is interesting is you'll hear in everybody's all-time pound-for-pound list Harry Greb, right? There's no fight film of him. He beat Gene Tunney, we know that, and he beat Mickey Walker and he's a very famous fighter. But how do we know he's pound-for-pound the best by just newspaper reports and who he beat?

NIGEL COLLINS (former editor of THE RING): I mean, I agree with people who think Sugar Ray Robinson is the greatest fighter of all time, but that has a lot to do with aesthetics. His record is great and his

THE CHOCOLATITO EFFECT



FOR ROMAN GONZALEZ, BEING NO. 1 ON A FANTASY LIST HAD VERY REAL BENEFITS

By Brian Harty

The pound-for-pound haters might say mythical lists should stick to the Neighborhood of Make-Believe, but consider the case of Roman Gonzalez.

He first showed up in THE RING's Top 10 when Sergio Martinez was ejected after losing to Miguel Cotto in June 2014. At that time, "Chocolatito" was already a two-division titleholder with an unpadded record of 39-0 (33 knockouts), but still many people saw his name and went, "Who?"

Put under scrutiny by his inclusion on the list, fans paid attention to Gonzalez's next fight even though it took place in Japan, wasn't televised abroad and, most damning of all, he was a flyweight – normally a three-part recipe for boxing invisibility. They tracked down YouTube clips of the Nicaraguan, now a three-division titleholder, and saw the footwork, the balance, the precision, the intelligence and the power for themselves – and once they saw it, the bandwagon started to fill up.

"It helped a lot," Gonzalez told THE RING through manager Carlos Blandon. "Because of our weight, some audiences did not know of us, so it helped our weight class be recognized."

Gonzalez moved quickly up the list with increasing attention until, just four fights after his pound-for-pound debut, an HBO-televised second-round stoppage of Edgar Sosa brought him within reach of the pinnacle, second only to Floyd Mayweather Jr. After Mayweather announced his retirement in mid-September 2015, THE RING handed the crown to Gonzalez.

There were some hysterics, mostly Andre Ward supporters or those who couldn't wrap their head around a 112-pounder being the best fighter in the world – often one and the same – but not many. Generally people had to admit that this little badass from Central America had changed their viewpoint: Why *not* a flyweight?

It's hard to say what the title did for him at the negotiating table, but from that point on, promotional adverts and Chocolatito's pre-fight introductions included the phrase "number one pound-for-pound." It became a selling point the general public could understand, having been subjected to it endlessly by members of The Money Team in recent years, and Gonzalez's profile rose.

"All my countrymen of Nicaragua were so happy with the inclusion of me in the pound-for-pound ranking without minding what place, and then when we got the number one spot I think everyone that supports me was even more proud," said Gonzalez. "I compare winning the pound-for-pound award to having won an extra world title, a true blessing."

And in some ways, with so many previously underappreciated accomplishments in the "real" world, it was the title that mattered most.

accomplishments are great, but he had a really pleasing aesthetic style, where he got that name "Sugar" Ray. Even when he's washed up, you see like his last fight, Joey Archer, he looked slick in there, he looked good. Even when he's washed up and he's lost the fight, just for a minute or so he could look like the old Ray. There was an aesthetic value to his style that you couldn't help but admire. And I think aesthetics play into who you like.

HOPKINS: You don't need a lot of fights to get on pound-for-pound lists today, because the talent pool isn't as great as it once was 20, 30, 40 years ago. The top-tier fighters today could fight in any era. There just aren't as many great fighters out there. People love pound-for-pound lists because it gets people talking. It makes you wonder and think where guys should go. It separates and identifies the top studs in the sport. I was one of those studs. I can't fight heavyweight and I couldn't fight lightweight, but to me, being on that list showed where I measured up against the best.

MERCHANT: I'm not a list guy. I understand the value of lists to media and sometimes there are lists that I look over just to amuse myself or to spout about how crazy can you be. But myself, I don't imagine lists.

Awards shows are fascinating, right? What is that but another set of lists? And people can say "We were the best movie of the year" or who's the best actor of the year ... so it's good for promotion and marketing. And it reflects an interest – the public's interest in whatever the lists are about.

Skill plus resume makes you number 1. Have to have an elite name on your record
@TheEnglandMan via Twitter

DUVA (on promoting Whitaker as the pound-for-pound champ): That was not something we came up with in a boardroom; it happened organically. I can't remember if it was something (late husband and former Main Events CEO) Dan came up with while talking to the media or if a sports writer called Whitaker that, but we embraced it. We used it in our promotions. In fact, it was part of the official title of Whitaker's (1997) fight with Oscar De La Hoya.

But it wasn't a promotional title or marketing gimmick with Pernell. That's what he was! He always believed that, and he proved it when he fought Julio Cesar Chavez. There were many roadblocks to that fight being made, but Dan knew Whitaker needed that career-defining fight. To fight Chavez, we had to do it on Showtime and Whitaker had a contract with HBO, which didn't want him to do the fight. HBO was paying Whitaker $5 million per fight against anyone and they were willing to pay him more not to go to Showtime, but it wasn't about the money with Pernell; he wanted a challenge and he wanted to prove that he was the best.

I still remember hearing him yell at Dan over the phone, 'Don't give me no easy fights!' That attitude, to me, had just as much to do with him being "pound for pound" as his skills and his boxing style.

MERCHANT (on referring to Roy Jones Jr., whom HBO featured heavily, as pound-for-pound No. 1): I think it was organic in the modern sense because Roy was a spectacular fighter in his prime, but never a huge gate attraction, and it was a way of identifying him as this sensational guy. And in the boxing world, maybe it meant something, some additional honor. Maybe it's the boxing version of the "Medal of Honor" that's a higher award than your other medals. But once in a while a fighter comes along and those who are interested in boxing want to single out and give credit to him.

Hell nah. Waste of time.
@jamesgogue via Twitter

STEPHEN ESPINOZA (general manager of Showtime Sports): The pound-for-pound list is not something that we closely track in targeting fighters or matchups. It is often too arbitrary and it can be susceptible to a bandwagon mentality or "groupthink." We got in business with Floyd Mayweather because he was the No. 1 star in boxing. He also happened to be the No. 1 pound-for-pound fighter in the world. In the end, not many fans can tell you who the Top 5 or Top 10 pound-for-pound boxers are. But they all can tell you who their favorite fighter is. We want to televise your favorite fighter on Showtime.

MERCHANT: I've never had a fighter bring it up to me. By the time a fighter gets to that status, he knows who he is. I'm sure there's some gratification from being recognized by your peers for being the best or one of the best who's not the heavyweight champion of the world. And I'm sure there's value to it in the business side of what is a sport and a business. The promoters do it more than the prizefighters do it. The fighter can say, 'Well, they call me the best, but who knows?' That's called a humblebrag, I think.

The other tradition of pound-for-pound is that a heavyweight is not considered pound-for-pound; he's considered the best fighter in the world by virtue of being the heavyweight champion, which is an even higher award than pound-for-pound champion! Right? I mean, people talk about the heavyweight champion more than they do the mythical pound-for-pound champion. But for some guys it's like getting some other kind of personal honor, whether it's a fragment of a title or something bigger.

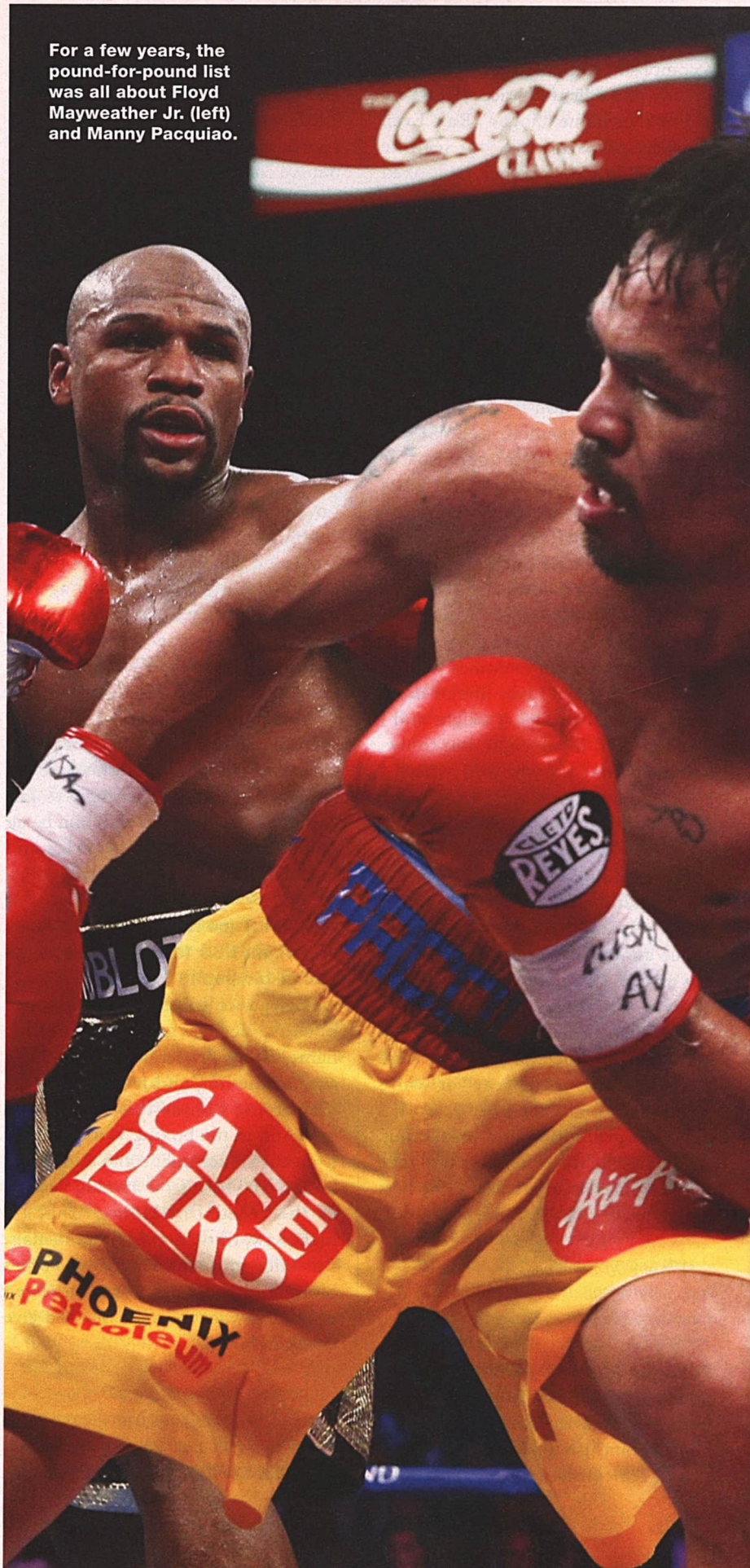
BARTOLINI: As far as earnings, it's very important, because if you're considered "pound for pound," you're a bigger earner. Hence, it seems like every time we have a big fight, it's for the pound-for-pound title. ... We had Kovalev vs. Ward – that was "pound

for pound." Two months after that we had Golovkin vs. Canelo, which was "pound for pound." So it's tossed around by promoters to promote the fight, and it's important to the fighters to be considered that because it's more for earnings. So they want to be considered that, whether they are or believe themselves to be, it's great to be considered that because it means more money. They might say it's pride, but at the end of the day it's gonna be more money for them.

HOPKINS: It mattered to me whose pound-for-pound list I was ranked No. 1 on. I knew I made it when I was on top of THE RING's list. I see today's Top 10 list, especially with THE RING, and I agree 99 percent with it – and I never agree with anyone on anything. The only reason why I don't give it 100 percent is because I'm not on the top of the list. And I don't give a damn if I retired a year ago. Toward the end, I still wanted to be on the pound-for-pound list. Hey, I fought two tough lions on the way out. I agree with who's on THE RING's Top 10 list. I also think the Charlos (Jermell and Jermall) will be factors in the future. Not yet, but they're coming. I really like Jermell, who recently knocked out (Erickson) Lubin.

HATTON: It was incredible to fight for the pound-for-pound title against Mayweather, who will go down as one of the greatest fighters of all time. For that fight, I took 30,000 Brits to Las Vegas and they made it the occasion that it was. That had never been done and I don't think it'll be done again. Even though that fight ended up in defeat, I still look back on it as one of my proudest moments.

I went over to Vegas for Mayweather-Pacquiao because I thought if there was one occasion that could emulate my fight with Floyd, from a crowd and atmosphere point of view, then that would be the one. I take great pride in saying it was nowhere near.



For a few years, the pound-for-pound list was all about Floyd Mayweather Jr. (left) and Manny Pacquiao.

You just know if a guy is P4P. You can see it when he fights. For example ggg middle rds vs canelo, he painted a masterpiece @MarkMccahill via Twitter

BARTOLINI: I went to see (Roy Jones) in January and when I covered it, my exact words were, 'For a moment, there's a flash and you see *the* Roy Jones.' And everyone gasps. And that's why people are coming out to see a 50-year-old Roy Jones, because they have that one moment, just like with the Joey Archer (vs. Robinson) fight.

HATTON: Floyd had a unique style. Other fighters try to emulate it and they just can't do it the way he does. The art is to hit and not get hit, and in the early rounds against me, Floyd weathered the storm. He chose his moments to have a rest and he chose his moments to put his foot on the gas. That's a very clever fighter. It's not just the defense, the speed and the timing; that's down to what he has between his ears – his brains.

For Manny (Pacquiao) to go through the weights the way he has, as the smaller man, sets him aside. He was so quick, shuffling in and out with his feet, firing off loads of punches. That style allowed him to beat much bigger men.

So, to be honest, until my comeback, which was for personal reasons, it was only two modern greats, two of the greatest of all time, who beat me. When I first laced up the gloves as a 10-year-old, I never thought my record would be where it stands today.

I beat the No. 2 (Kostya Tszyu) but I just couldn't beat the No. 1.

MERCHANT: I like to call it prizefighting, not boxing. To me, "boxing" harkens to a day when it was amateur boxing; prizefighting is the professional game. There used to be a real line between what was boxing and what was prizefighting. So I include not just that a boxer has talent, but moves people in some ways, thrills them often in some way, and in the risk and reward equation of the careers they'd chosen that they were willing to take risks in the ring – that losing a fight is not the end of the world, that it depends on how you fought. I have a different feeling about the sport in general than some people do, and that enters into any thoughts and feelings I have about whoever's about to get into a professional prizefight. I think that matters.

I love the P4P lists. It's completely subjective but in the absence of fights across weight classes, gives fans a chance to dream. @mrTommysalami via Twitter

BARTOLINI: It's a great debate that can go on without a winner. So you can have five different so-called experts give you a pound-for-pound list and they'll all be different and they'll all have their different arguments for it. It's a debate, not argument – nobody's throwing down over pound-for-pound lists. It seems nowadays, even more so than ever, people love lists. And everyone makes these lists of all-time greats. All right, now who was pound-for-pound the all-time great? So after you're done with the who's currently pound-for-pound, you go to the all-time greats. People enjoy thinking about it, and if fans and the media like it, then if you're writing a pound-for-pound list it's gonna stir interest in what you have to say. It's always something where you say, 'OK, here's my pound-for-pound list' and people are going to read the top to the bottom of the list. Then you can put down your little blurb about why you feel that way.

COLLINS: I'm anti-"pound for pound," but I must admit, throughout my term as editor of THE RING I put it in the magazine and now I'm participating in ESPN's pound-for-pound. But I do it – well, with ESPN I do it to be a good team member – but I did it in THE RING because the fans love it. If it was up to me it would disappear, because it really is just like an opinion, where the divisional rankings, they actually mean something – you know, if you're fighting good fighters, you move up.

"Pound for pound" is the arena in your mind. So if you have Larry Holmes fighting a guy who is actually a featherweight, like Manny Pacquiao or something, you've got to assume they're both the same size, and a heavyweight that could fight like Manny Pacquiao would be sensational. But if it's a real Manny Pacquiao vs. a real Larry Holmes, it would just be ridiculous, so it really doesn't mean anything except fun stuff to talk about. But I think it's taken too seriously in some respects, because it's used as a marketing tool. But personally, if I wasn't trying to please the readers, I wouldn't have anything to do with it.

MERCHANT: How do you measure who's who when you want to put it on paper or have a discussion? Is the pound-for-pound fighter the best fighter in the world, supposedly? Is he the best fighter to watch in the world? I don't know how you measure those things. But it's a thing.

My barbershop would be ghostly silent without P4P discussion. @SweetSciencePhD via Twitter

COLLINS: You know that comedy routine in the barbershop where they talk about Joe Louis in *Coming to America*? They have a boxing argument and it's one of the greatest scenes in the world. The old Jewish guy is the only white guy and he says – because they were talking about Joe Louis and Muhammad Ali – "What about Rocky Marciano?" And the barber freaks out: "Every time there's a white guy, he pulls Rocky Marciano out of his ass!" And the Jewish guy says, "He beat Joe Louis' ass." And the other guy goes, "Joe Louis was 137!" But you see what pound-for-pound does. It's an exaggeration to prove a point. It's a great scene and boxing fans love it because they know how true it is.

POWER, PATIENCE AND POUND-FOR-POUND PREEMINENCE

GENNADY GOLOVKIN'S JOURNEY TO THE POUND-FOR-POUND PINNACLE WAS ARDUOUS AND OFTEN FRUSTRATING, BUT PERSISTANCE PAID OFF

By **Tom Gray**

No journey to pound-for-pound supremacy is the same.

In 1989, the then-undisputed heavyweight champion of the world, Mike Tyson, was the first fighter THE RING officially named as the best regardless of weight class. As much monster-man as prizefighter, the Brooklyn native transcended the sport and just the name "Tyson" evoked fear. There were kids naming fierce-looking dogs after him and it was just impossible to imagine his downfall.

Twenty-five years and several pound-for-pound kings later, Roman "Chocolatito" Gonzalez reached the top spot via a different route. When Floyd Mayweather retired in September 2015, the unbeaten three-weight world titleholder was next in line. At that time, Gonzalez was 40-0 (34 knockouts) and – uniquely – he was a flyweight. Sublimely skilled, but largely ignored because he hailed from the lower weight classes, the diminutive Nicaraguan had to wait years for his quality to be recognized.

Why is this relevant? Because Tyson plus Gonzalez equals the man who currently occupies the top spot in THE RING's pound-for-pound top 10, Gennady Golovkin.

Like Tyson, Golovkin carries thunderous power, and no physical attribute is as alluring to fight fans. Tyson was Godzilla, whereas GGG is like the stoic henchman in a James Bond film – except this bad guy puts a beating on 007 and the movie ends.

But, like Gonzalez, it took Golovkin years to reach the top rung of the pound-for-pound ladder. And, like Chocolatito, it took the retirement of another pound-for-pound star – in this case Andre Ward – for GGG to finally be recognized as the finest fighter in the world.

To hell with the circumstances. Golovkin has created opportunities and his path to pound-for-pound stardom is worth revisiting.

A glittering amateur career culminated in Olympic silver for Golovkin at the Athens Games in 2004. In May 2006, at the relatively late age of 24, the future middleweight king turned professional with all but one of his first 18 bouts taking place in Germany. Opponents were falling over like dominoes, everything was going according to plan, but the problem that would persist throughout his career had already begun.

Nobody was queueing up to face Golovkin. His reputation as a devastating amateur talent had preceded him, and he was now decimating professional middleweights effortlessly. One of the knocks on GGG is the quality of his opposition, but that is unfair. When Golovkin was upgraded from interim to WBA middleweight titleholder in 2010, Felix Sturm was declared "super champion" by the same organization. Did Sturm want a piece of Golovkin? It's more likely that the German technician was checking under his bed every night to make sure he wasn't there.

Golovkin continued to bolster his fearsome reputation regardless: Kassim Ouma (TKO 10), Grzegorz Proksa (TKO 5), Gabriel Rosado (TKO 7). And they weren't just beaten; they were pulverized.

In June 2013, Golovkin faced two-time world title challenger Matthew Macklin. The battle-hardened Englishman was very unlucky not to have claimed a world title against Sturm two years earlier and he had given then-lineal middleweight king Sergio Martinez all he could handle before being stopped in 11. Golovkin almost chased Macklin out of the ring before lowering the boom with one of the most devastating and efficient left hooks to the body you could ever hope to see.

"It looks like he didn't even hit me that hard," laughed Macklin. "It actually looks like he could have put more into it. It was so more well-placed. He didn't load up. He just put it there. He'd caught me a good left hook around the ear in one of the rounds and I knew I couldn't afford to take a flush hook to the chin that I didn't see coming. He had that kind of power.

"When he threw the two uppercuts, I expected the left hook

to the head. Of course, he was cute enough to bring it downstairs and that shot broke my top two ribs. I was completely winded, as you can imagine and, with two ribs broken, I was in agony. You're looking at four to six weeks to recover from that. You're OK, don't get me wrong, but sitting down or standing up, you can feel it."

The victories and the crushing knockouts kept on coming: Curtis Stevens (TKO 8), Daniel Geale (TKO 3), Marco Antonio Rubio (KO 2), Martin Murray (TKO 11), Willie Monroe Jr. (TKO 6), David Lemieux (TKO 8) and Dominic Wade (KO 2).

Now a unified middleweight titleholder, thanks to his punch-perfect display against Lemieux and the WBC stripping Canelo Alvarez for refusing to adhere to a deadline to face him, Golovkin was suddenly confronted with an unlikely challenge. After Chris Eubank Jr. elected to hide behind his father rather than face the Kazakhstani power-puncher, Kell Brook, the reigning IBF welterweight titleholder, decided to fill the void. Brook, in what many viewed as a suicide mission, made the audacious choice to leap two divisions in a bid to dethrone the most feared fighter in the world.

"(Golovkin) leaves himself there to be hit at times, and I'm going to hit him very hard," Brook told RingTV.com before the fight, which took place on Sept. 10, 2016, in London. "He does seem to have a good chin and walks straight through these fighters, but I'm going to bring speed, head movement and my boxing brain. The plan is to hit and not be hit.

As Golovkin climbed the rankings, he and trainer Abel Sanchez never stopped working to build a better fighter.

"Win, lose or draw, I know I'm going in there with the best fighter in world boxing."

Brook was hurt midway through the first round by a left hook, and Golovkin let loose. However, not only did the Englishman survive the session, miraculously, he decided to engage. Brook swept the second round on all three scorecards, smashing Golovkin around the head with terrific combinations. It looked

great, the British crowd was in an uproar, but there was one problem: The shots were akin to tennis balls striking a tank. In the fifth round, Brook had to be rescued by his corner when a fractured orbital bone and a rampaging Golovkin became a serious threat to his long-term health.

Perhaps former IBF middleweight titleholder Darren Barker said it best prior to Golovkin's bout with Geale.

"There's nobody going to bother Golovkin at middleweight," said Barker. "Gennady will have to move up because he'll batter anyone at 160 pounds. (Miguel) Cotto would get annihilated. If you're a middleweight you've had it. Moving up is the only option for Golovkin because he can't move down. Can you imagine those poor junior middleweights trying to deal with that? This guy is the total package and you have to be Superman to take those shots."

Not a Superman, but a Miracle Man. Danny Jacobs' career stalled when he was diagnosed with bone cancer in 2011. Fight again? Doctors told the former amateur star that it was unlikely that he would be able to walk normally. However, with a fighter's spirit, Jacobs confounded the critics and was back in the ring after just 19 months of inactivity. He came back slowly but deliberately, and after 10 knockouts in 10 fights, Jacobs was ready for the ultimate challenge.

This was always going to be a good fight. Jacobs is a terrific boxer-puncher and a wonderful athlete. The Brooklyn native is like a prime version of Jermain Taylor with added injections of aggression and durability. He was knocked out by Dmitry Pirog in July 2010, but when one considers that was less that a year prior to his diagnosis, how sure can we be sure that Jacobs was at 100 percent in that fight?

In March 2017, he gave Golovkin hell on Earth. A good start and a fourth-round knockdown was enough to give the champion the edge in a close fight, but Jacobs fought beautifully at times. His adept lateral movement, switch-hitting and ability to absorb hammer-like blows resulted in Golovkin being taken the distance for the first time in 24 outings. The champion retained his belts on a tight unanimous decision, but his apparent vulnerability perhaps led to a deal being struck for the fight everyone had been waiting for.

With the departure of Mayweather, Canelo Alvarez was the biggest pay-per-view attraction in the sport. The Mexican star was a former unified junior middleweight champion when he moved up to challenge Miguel Cotto for the RING and WBC middleweight titles. The one caveat was that the bout would take place at 155 pounds. That was acceptable for both fighters, as they hailed from lighter divisions, but it became a serious issue when Alvarez prevailed and expected full middleweights to lose an extra five pounds if they wanted a title shot.

Golovkin wasn't about to go there and nobody could blame him.

On Sept. 16, 2017, the pair finally squared off at the full middleweight limit of 160 pounds. It was an authentic superfight at the T-Mobile Arena in Las Vegas and it delivered. Alvarez looked better than ever, boxing and moving brilliantly against the naturally bigger man. Golovkin had built up a full head of steam by the middle rounds and appeared to dominate those sessions. Alvarez closed well, but the prevailing wisdom at ringside was that GGG had done enough to retain his belts and lift his rival's lineal and RING titles.

The official result was a split-decision draw. The unified titleholder appeared deflated at the post-fight press conference, and his team was aghast that judge Adalaide Byrd managed to give Alvarez 10 of 12 rounds. But while the crowd had booed, nobody asked for their money back. And Golovkin could be consoled by the consensus that he was indeed the best middleweight in the world.

The pair will hopefully lock horns again in 2018 and Golovkin will once again get an opportunity to show the world just how good he is.

"I knew how good he was before 99 percent of people," said Macklin, who has known of Golovkin since both were teenage amateurs. "I knew back in 2000 that he was the real deal. He won gold at the (junior) World Championships (in Budapest, Hungary) and he won Best Boxer. I remember thinking that if this fella won gold and Best Boxer, he must be a top kid.

"When he turned professional, taking out the fact that he was a rival of mine, I felt sorry for him because he was avoided so much. People always wanted to fight Mayweather because you get loads of money and you don't get knocked out. Back then, with Golovkin, he cleaned you out cold and you didn't really make much money.

"I loved watching him fight. We're boxers, but every fighter is a fan at heart. I loved his style, his aggression, and he's exciting to watch. I'm delighted that he's finally getting the recognition and the money he deserves."

Because the "mythical rankings" are subjective, you may not agree that Golovkin should top THE RING's pound-for-pound list. You may think Vasyl Lomachenko or Terence Crawford should be No. 1. However, here are some statistics worth perusing. When Golovkin was defending a fringe WBA title belt in December 2010, Lomachenko was focused on the amateur World Championships in Azerbaijan. Crawford was 12-0 (9 KOs) and was taking part in six-rounders.

It's highly likely that Lomachenko, Crawford, or perhaps even Mikey Garcia will take over the pound-for-pound mantle in the future. One of them, or perhaps all of them, will have their day.

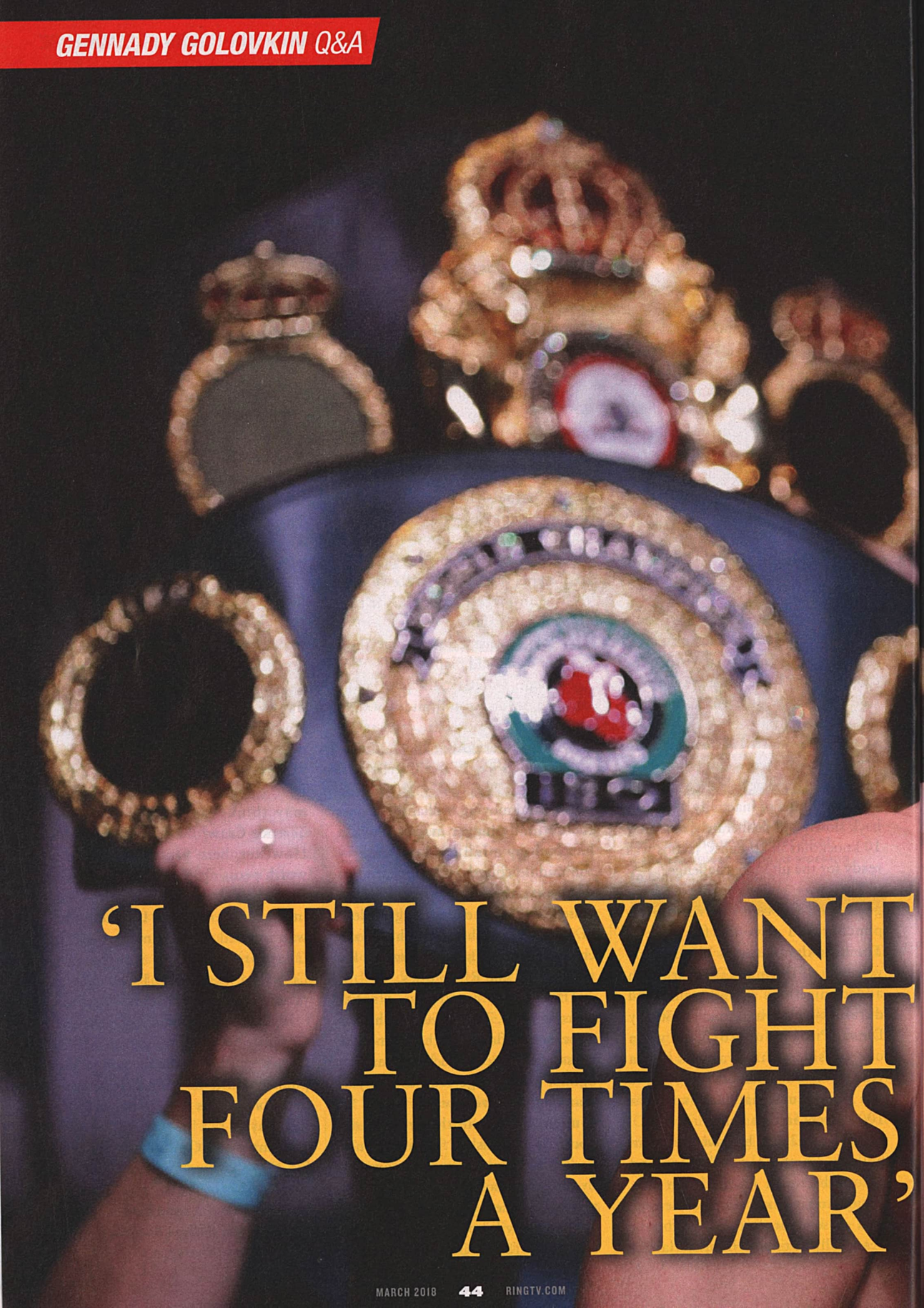
Right now, Golovkin is having his. RING

Tom Gray is the associate editor for THE RING. Follow him on Twitter: @Tom_Gray_Boxing.

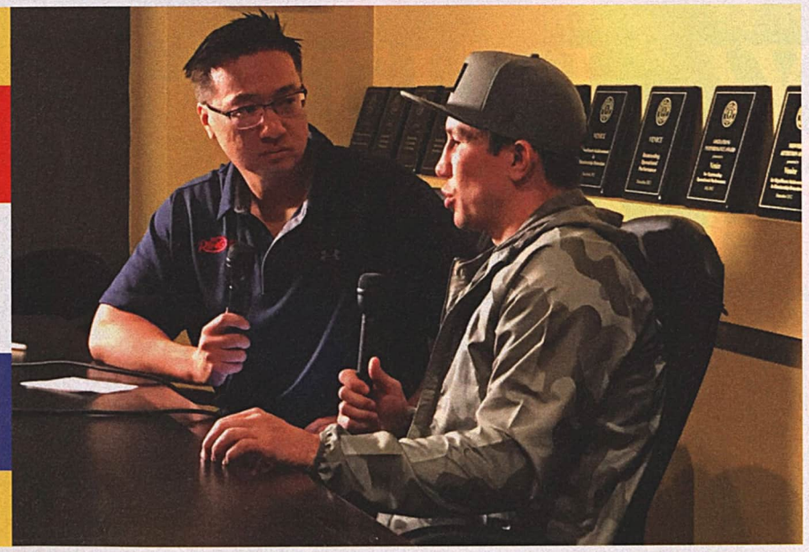
‘I STILL WANT TO FIGHT FOUR TIMES A YEAR’

GENNADY GOLOVKIN’S INTERVIEWS IN ENGLISH HAVE AN ENDEARING QUALITY BUT HE TAKES ON A MORE SERIOUS TONE IN RUSSIAN

By **Doug Fischer/Steve Kim**



Golovkin isn’t finished collecting middleweight titles.



Gennady Golovkin recently sat down with THE RING Editor Doug Fischer and RingTV contributor Steve Kim to discuss the fighter's controversial draw with Canelo Alvarez and look ahead to his plans for 2018 (which obviously include an anticipated rematch with the Mexican star).

The 35-year-old unified middleweight titleholder also granted Kim a one-on-one video interview, but the 20-minute chat was a departure from Golovkin's usual on-camera Q&As because it was conducted in Russian.

What's the difference? To put it bluntly, Golovkin is more "real" in a native tongue. Remember, English is his fourth language behind Kazakh, Russian and German. Golovkin in English is that grinning, charming gentleman pugilist that gives us the "Good Boy," "Mexican Style," "Big Drama Show," and "I Respect Box" catchphrases. Golovkin in Russian isn't quite as warm. In fact, he can be a bit surly, but he also expresses his thoughts and feelings better, which is what we wanted.

And it's what Golovkin gave us with the help of translator Zarina Mamyrkulova. GGG let his hands go on the subject of Adalaide Byrd's awful 118-110 scorecard and what he perceives as a media bias for Alvarez, but he also complimented Canelo's advancement as a fighter and reaffirmed his desire for a second fight with the Mexican star.

Kim told GGG Promotions executive director Tom Loeffler, who hosted the interview at his office in Santa Monica, California, "When (Golovkin) does interviews in Russian, he seems to be much more forceful. There's a lot of pride with him and there is an edge."

Golovkin lightened up after the video interview while discussing his 2018 schedule. He made it clear that he wants the Canelo rematch, but added he would go back to being one of boxing's busiest champions if a deal for a Cinco De Mayo pay-per-view showdown isn't made in a timely fashion.

Although he knows it will limit his activity, Golovkin's top goal for 2018 is the rematch with Canelo.

"I'd like to fight three to four times next year," Golovkin said. "If I have a big money fight scheduled for May, obviously I can't fight as much as I'd like to.

"But I'm not obsessed with May. I'd get back in the ring in February if it were up to me. If Canelo isn't ready to do it in May, maybe somebody else is

Golovkin charges Daniel Jacobs along the ropes during their competitive March encounter.

ready to go earlier in the year. Maybe (Jermall) Charlo. Maybe the Japanese guy (Ryota Murata)."

[Editor's note: Loeffler told THE RING that he has had discussions with Murata's co-promoter, Akihiko Honda of Teiken Promotions, about a showdown with Golovkin at the Tokyo Dome at the end of 2018. "A title fight in Japan interests me," Golovkin commented. "I have Asian blood."]

"I miss fighting four times a year," Golovkin continued. "I'm a true fighter and a true boxing fan. I love training and fighting. I'm the kind of guy who misses his sparring partners. They're great guys. If there weren't rules against it, I'd love to give them the opportunity to fight me for the title. If some of the guys I had in camp, like Julian Williams, had been in the ring with me on Sept. 16, we would have given fans a treat.

"I'm serious. You should have seen the work they gave me in the gym, each going two rounds with me; it was beautiful."

Golovkin plans to get back to camp at Abel Sanchez's Summit Gym in the high altitude of Big Bear Lake, California, no later than January, whether he has a fight scheduled or not.

"I'm still learning up there in the mountains," he said. "I like being an inspiration to young, hungry boxers, because being around them keeps me motivated."

Kim's interview with Golovkin follows. It was translated and transcribed by Vladimir Lik.

RING: Let's go back to the night of Sept. 16. When the last bell sounded, did you think you won the fight?

Gennady Golovkin: Well yes, of course, I was confident that the fight was ours. I believed at that point there was a greater chance of winning the decision on points than losing the fight. I believe we won by at least two or three rounds, so yes, I thought we won the fight.

RING: Adalaide Byrd's card was 118-110 for Canelo Alvarez. What

was going through your mind at that point?

Golovkin: You know ... what can I really say? A lot was done and made for Canelo to win this fight, but in reality, if Canelo would have indeed beaten me, then the decision would have gone (to him) instead of it being a draw. I believe a lot of work was done for Canelo to at least not lose this fight. But, in the end, the judges decided it was a draw. I don't even want to discuss the 118-110 scorecard because it's just ridiculous. I just want to say that Canelo and his team have gone everywhere saying they won the fight, but in my opinion if they really won then the judges wouldn't have ruled it a draw. I just want to remind them that there's no reason to lie to the boxing fans who watched the fight and understand exactly what they saw.

RING: Has Canelo gotten better than you remember him (from sparring sessions six years ago) in Big Bear, California?

Golovkin: Yes, of course, he changed a lot. He is much stronger now and much more experienced. His weight is different (he's heavier), as well, of course. This is now a different Canelo. This isn't the young boy from back then. He's a very experienced fighter now. Even during our fight, at certain times, I liked what I saw from him and I like the fighter he's become.

RING: Have you seen the fight on video?

Golovkin: No, I didn't watch it. It's not interesting for me at this point in time. You know the saying "you have good days and you have bad days," well for me, this was a bad day in my career. I don't need to watch it until ... well, at this moment there's just no reason for me to analyze anything, so I don't need to watch it yet.

RING: Do you want the rematch next?

Golovkin: Yes, of course, I would like to have a second fight. I am extremely interested in a second fight.

RING: What are some of the things you hear in the streets now?

Golovkin: First of all, I am very thankful to all the fans and everyone who supports me. These days many fans are interested in discussing not just the fight, but they are wondering why television and certain media only focused on highlighting Canelo and his best moments of the fight when I am the one who is the champion and they saw that I won the fight. These days people want to discuss boxing politics. I think this fight showed people a lot and now I think it's a good sign that people are becoming savvier about boxing and are starting to understand what's going on and not just paying attention to boxing propaganda.

RING: What else do you want to accomplish in 2018?

Golovkin: It's hard to say what else I want to accomplish because ... let's just say people need to keep their word, and at this moment we don't even have a date to settle who is the best and who is the strongest. It's hard to make this into a reality at this moment. But, of course, the second fight with Canelo and then, ultimately, unifying all the titles is our goal.

RING: Any opinion on the WBO middleweight title bout between Billy Joe Saunders and David Lemieux?

Golovkin: It's really hard to say who will win that fight and to make predictions in boxing. It's going to be an interesting fight and I am very curious to see who Saunders really is and how Lemieux will show up.

RING: You've said in the past that boxing has become boring to you. What is your relationship with boxing now?

Golovkin: Nothing has changed. I still feel the same way. Now there are a few fights that are intriguing to me, but these are not the easiest fights to make happen. Let's just say these guys are running away from me so that's why, generally, I still feel the same way. As I get older I have other interests now, but we will work hard to make those fights happen while still holding our ground.

RING: How much longer do you want to fight?

Golovkin: I feel very good right now, so I am planning to stay in boxing. I can't say for how long I can stay in the sport, because this is boxing and that means every fight and every punch can change everything. But I think I will be sticking around. If things go my way, I will stay in boxing.

RING: What have you been up to since the fight?

Golovkin: First of all, I went home after the fight to see my family. This was very important for me. Most recently, here in the U.S., my last (business) trip was to Dallas, Texas, where I made a deal with Tecate, which is very exciting. I think this is a big deal for me and for boxing because of the support they can provide to us.

RING: The Jordan Brand shirts sold out quickly. What's your relationship like with Jordan Brand?

Golovkin: There was so much interest in those shirts that I wasn't surprised they sold out. A lot of people want something with the Jordan logo on it and my initials. I think in the future we will work on bringing more merchandise out and there will be enough for everyone.

RING: One final message to your fans for 2018?

Golovkin: I really want to say thank you to my all my fans and the people out there who both support me and criticize me. I want to come back to the ring as soon as possible and am working hard to get back to being a stronger, more confident and exciting boxer in 2018. We are working toward achieving all of our goals and I hope we can get to at least half of them.

WHEN OLYMPIANS CLASH

LOMACHENKO VS. RIGONDEAUX WAS THE MOST RECENT PRO SHOWDOWN BETWEEN OLYMPIC GOLD MEDALISTS

By **Anson Wainwright**

The pro versions of Vasyl Lomachenko (above) and Guillermo Rigondeaux retain the qualities that made them such formidable amateurs.

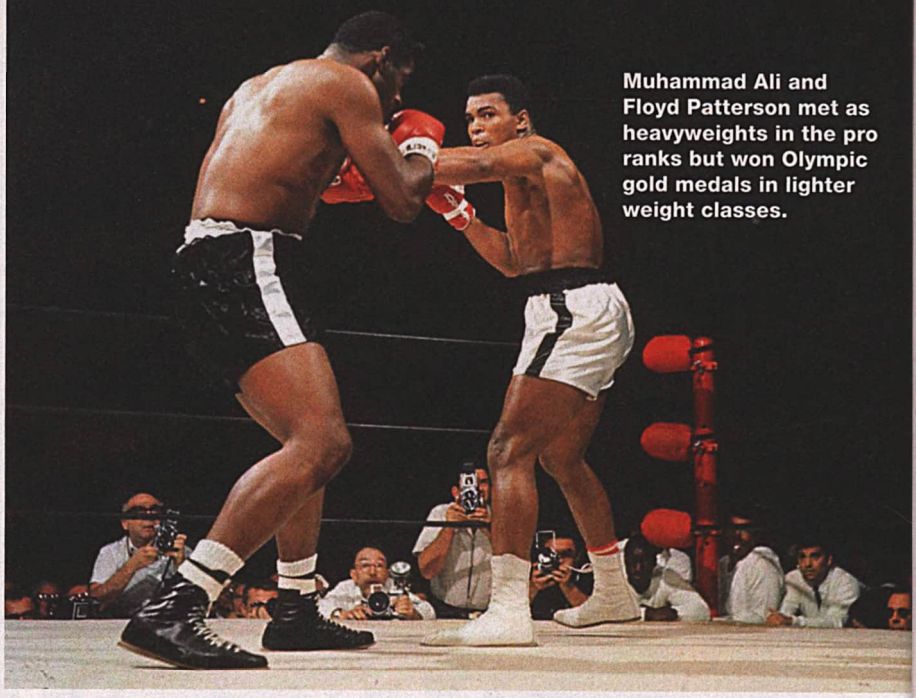
Boxing became a part of the modern Olympics in 1904, and ever since "the Games of the III Olympiad," which was hosted in St. Louis, Missouri, Olympic boxers have been turning pro, often facing each other in the paid ranks. However, meetings between two gold medalists is a rare and celebrated event. The Vasyl Lomachenko-Guillermo Rigondeaux fight on Dec. 9 took it to another level, as it was the first time two double Olympic gold medalists squared off as pros.

Both southpaws have worn the "prodigy" label. Lomachenko has gold medals from the 2008 and 2012 Olympic Games, a mind-bending amateur record of 396-1 and world titles in two divisions after just 10 pro contests. Rigondeaux won gold medals at the 2000 and 2004 Olympics and, had he not defected from Cuba, it's very likely he would've won a couple more. He captured a world title after his ninth pro fight and hasn't been without one in the eight fights since, except when they were taken away due to his inactivity (and that includes the RING belt).

Both fighters have the type of technical artistry that makes trainers sigh and turns fans into cultists, but Lomachenko's stock had soared due to the aggression he throws into his game while Rigondeaux's only-do-enough-to-win attitude had frustrated even his hardcore supporters. It'll be over by the time you read this, but the lure of this matchup was always that each man would be the other's perfect foil: Lomachenko would finally get the elite opponent to prove he's worthy of the hype, and Rigondeaux would finally be forced to unpack his full arsenal and show what he can really do – and when he did, said his remaining diehards, even his size disadvantage wouldn't matter.

In honor of this rare clash between two gold-strapped Top 5 pound-for-pounders, here are the other 24 times Olympic champions have met in the professional arena:

WHEN OLYMPIANS CLASH



Muhammad Ali and Floyd Patterson met as heavyweights in the pro ranks but won Olympic gold medals in lighter weight classes.

AUG. 1, 1925 - Willie Smith W 10 Clarence Walker: Walker won gold as a bantamweight in 1920 and Smith followed four years later. In the summer of 1925, the two South Africans met to settle who was the better man. Smith took the win on points in just his second pro outing.

AUG. 22, 1925 - Fidel LaBarba W 10 Frankie Genaro: Genaro won gold in 1920 and LaBarba matched his feat four years later. The two met at Ascot Park in Los Angeles to fill the void left by the death of flyweight champion Pancho Villa. The 19-year-old LaBarba boxed his way to a decision victory in the first title bout held in California since boxing was legalized the previous year.

FEB. 9, 1929 - Fidel LaBarba W 15 Willie Smith: Both men won gold in Paris in 1924 in separate weight classes and met in Australia. LaBarba's greater class won out over the distance.

MARCH 16, 1929 - Fidel LaBarba TKO 12 Willie Smith: Just five weeks after their first meeting, the two men met in a rematch, again in Australia, and this time LaBarba left no doubt by stopping Smith in the 12th round.

AUG. 25, 1957 - Floyd Patterson KO 6 Pete Rademacher: Patterson claimed gold in 1952 at middleweight, Rademacher at heavyweight in 1956. Close to 20,000 came to Sicks' Stadium in Seattle for what was widely viewed as a mismatch. Rademacher, who was making his pro debut, shocked Patterson in the second round, dropping the defending heavyweight champion. But Rademacher was on the canvas seven times himself before he was rescued by the referee, former light heavyweight titlist Tommy Loughran.

NOV. 22, 1965 - Muhammad Ali TKO 12 Floyd Patterson: Eight years after Patterson claimed gold, Ali did the same up at light heavyweight. The two met at heavyweight with no love lost between them, and Ali toyed with the former champion before referee Harold Krause ended proceedings at 2:18 of the 12th round. It was Ali's second defense of his heavyweight title.

MARCH 8, 1971 - Joe Frazier UD 15 Muhammad Ali: Frazier followed Ali by four years to claim Olympic gold at heavyweight and picked up the baton as heavyweight champion during Ali's three-year exile from the sport. When Ali announced his intention to return, Frazier was put on notice and the two superpowers collided at Madison Square Garden in "The Fight of the Century." In front of a celebrity crowd, "The Greatest" started fast, using his considerable skillset to take an early lead, but Frazier powered back with greater activity and was able to take the lead with Ali visibly fatigued. The Philadelphian dropped Ali in the final round to punctuate the victory.

SEPT. 20, 1972 - Muhammad Ali TKO 7 Floyd Patterson: After losing to Ali seven years earlier, Patterson rebounded with several wins and, despite losing a title shot to Jimmy Ellis in 1968, managed to keep himself relevant. Ali had won seven fights in the 18 months since losing his unbeaten record to Frazier. Ali busted up his rival's left eye, forcing the fight to be curtailed at the conclusion of the seventh round.

JAN. 22, 1973 - George Foreman TKO 2 Joe Frazier: Foreman won gold at the 1968 Olympics and left a trail of destruction behind him as a pro, moving seamlessly to 37-0 (34 KOs). However, he'd never faced anyone of Frazier's standing. The two juggernauts collided in Kingston, Jamaica, and Frazier was tabbed as a pre-fight favorite. It meant little to a snarling Foreman, who tore through the defending champion, dropping him three times in the first and three times in the second to easily claim the undisputed heavyweight crown.

JAN. 28, 1974 - Muhammad Ali UD 12 Joe Frazier: The rivalry between these boxing superstars reached a fever pitch when the two brawled on the set of ABC's Wide World of Sports a week before their rematch. Ali leveled the series, edging Frazier at Madison Square Garden in a hard-fought contest.

OCT. 30, 1974 - Muhammad Ali KO 8 George Foreman: After beating Frazier, Ali was offered to Foreman as a sacrificial lamb. Don King brokered a deal that saw the two meet in the exotic outpost of

Kinshasa, Zaire, and dubbed the fight "The Rumble in the Jungle." Ali took a frightful beating, only to turn the tables on an exhausted Foreman by coming off the ropes with the now-famous "rope-a-dope." In doing so, Ali became only the second man to regain the heavyweight championship.

OCT. 1, 1975 - Muhammad Ali TKO 14 Joe Frazier: With Ali regaining the heavyweight championship a year earlier, it was only a matter of time before these two were back in the ring. Hostilities were resumed in "The Thrilla in Manila" as both men fought toe-to-toe in a battle of attrition that reached a crescendo when Frazier's trainer, Eddie Futch, pulled his fighter out before the final round. A fatigued Ali raised his hand and sank to the canvas, later claiming this was the closest he'd ever come to death. It was unsurprisingly THE RING's Fight of the Year.

JUNE 15, 1976 - George Foreman TKO 5 Joe Frazier: Frazier returned eight months after his titanic battle with Ali and faced another old rival. Despite fighting so brilliantly in Manila, Frazier was again no match for the sheer strength of the physically imposing Foreman.

FEB. 15, 1978 - Leon Spinks SD 15 Muhammad Ali: Although Ali was showing visible signs of wear and tear, he was expected to easily beat his fledgling pro opponent, who had won light heavyweight gold at the 1976 Olympics. The two fought a close-run battle before Spinks was anointed heavyweight champion by split decision.

SEPT. 15, 1978 - Muhammad Ali UD 15 Leon Spinks: In a straight rematch, Ali wrested the heavyweight championship back from Spinks by clear unanimous decision in front of a then-indoor boxing world record 63,350 spectators at the Superdome in New Orleans.

AUG. 16, 1986 - Howard Davis Jr. D 10 Meldrick Taylor: Davis claimed gold at the 1976 Olympics and Taylor did so in 1984. The two were at opposite ends of their careers; Davis had lost two title fights and was perceived as a good notch on the 19-year-old Taylor's resume. Davis used his defensive prowess and jab to keep Taylor at bay while the younger man looked to press the action. In the end, neither man was able to fully establish themselves and the fight was declared a draw.

NOV. 23, 1991 - Lennox Lewis TKO 3 Tyrell Biggs: On the undercard of Evander Holyfield-Bert Cooper in Atlanta, Lewis, a 1988 gold medalist, gained a measure of revenge by easily taking apart the man who had claimed gold in 1984 after defeating Lewis in the quarterfinals..

JAN. 10, 1992 - Frank Tate TKO 11 Andrew Maynard: Tate won gold as a junior middleweight in 1984 and Maynard did so at light heavyweight four years later. Tate dropped and stopped Maynard in the penultimate round to win the NABF 175-pound title.

APRIL 20, 1996 - Torsten May KO 10 Andrew Maynard: May succeeded Maynard as light heavyweight champion at the 1992 Olympics. The German had won his first 14 fights as a pro and Maynard had badly slipped by this time, with the inevitable knockout coming in the 10th round in Dusseldorf.

MAY 10, 1996 - Lennox Lewis MD 10 Ray Mercer: Lewis and Mercer both won gold at the 1988 Olympics – Lewis at super heavyweight, Mercer at heavyweight (201-pound limit). Lewis was rebuilding after losing to Oliver McCall a year and a half earlier. The two went shot-for-shot but were unable to dent each other, and Lewis barely edged his iron-jawed opponent on the cards.

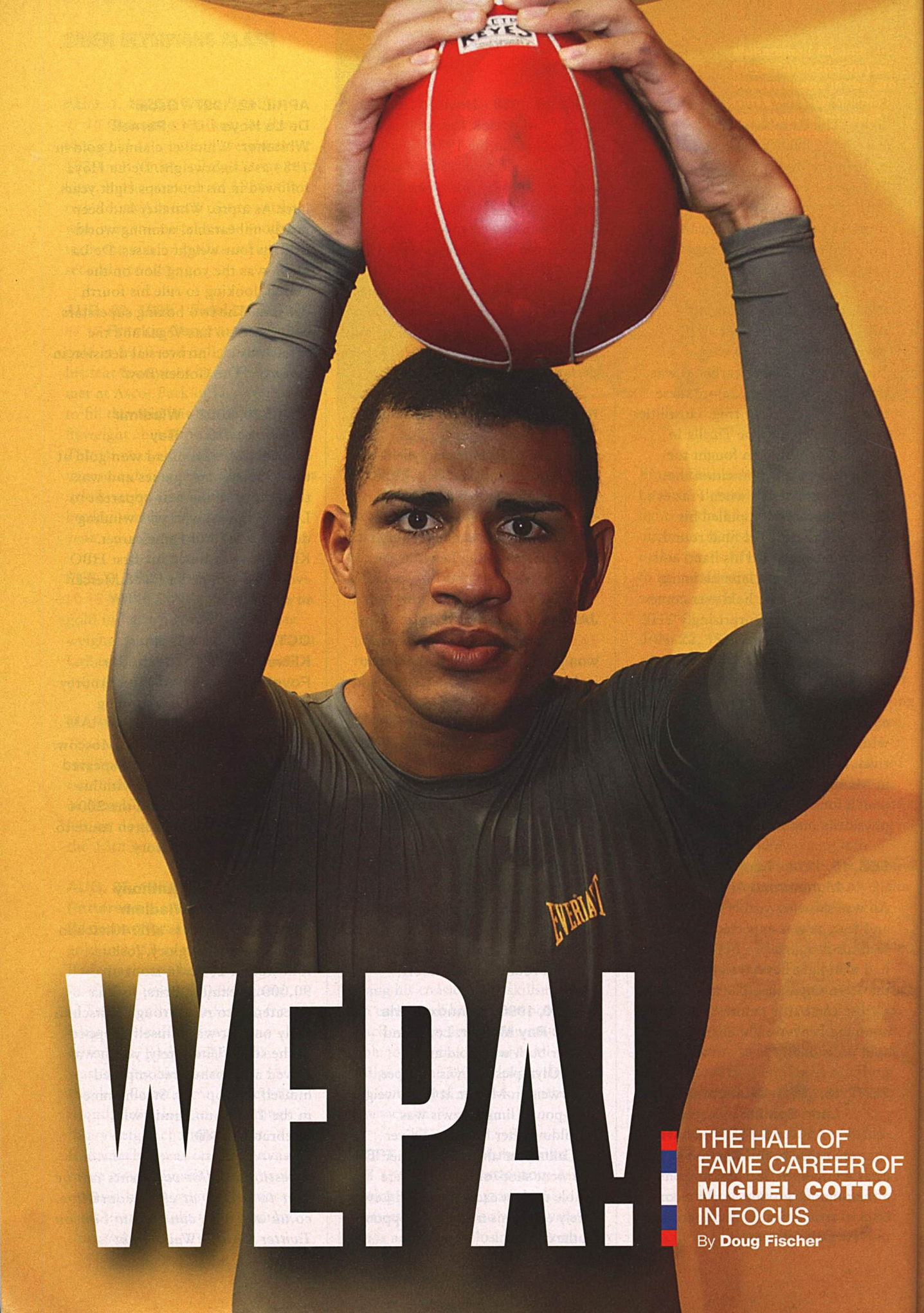
APRIL 12, 1997 - Oscar De La Hoya UD 12 Pernell Whitaker: Whitaker claimed gold in 1984 as a lightweight. De La Hoya followed in his footsteps eight years later. As a pro, Whitaker had been nearly unbeatable, winning world titles in four weight classes. De La Hoya was the young lion on the march, looking to rule his fourth division. The two boxing superstars converged on Las Vegas and the result was a controversial decision in favor of "The Golden Boy."

JUNE 29, 2002 - Wladimir Klitschko TKO 6 Ray Mercer: Klitschko had won gold at the 1996 summer games and was thought of as the heir apparent to Lennox Lewis, who was winding down his Hall of Fame career. Klitschko headlined his first HBO event and stopped a faded Mercer in six rounds.

OCT. 5, 2013 - Wladimir Klitschko UD 12 Alexander Povetkin: Russian oligarch Andrey Ryabinsky put up a whopping $23,333,330 to bring this heavyweight unification to Moscow. From the get-go, Klitschko speared his rival from a distance with his ramrod jab and dropped the 2004 gold medalist four times en route to a landslide points victory.

APRIL 29, 2017 - Anthony Joshua TKO 11 Wladimir Klitschko: 16 years after Klitschko claimed Olympic glory, Joshua followed in 2012. In front of 90,000 screaming Brits, Joshua threatened to run through Klitschko early on, but was himself dropped in the sixth. Ultimately, youth was served and Joshua recomposed himself to stop "Dr. Steelhammer" in the 11th round amid wild celebrations.

Questions and/or comments can be sent to Anson at elraincoat@live.co.uk and you can follow him on Twitter @AnsonWainwright



WEPA!

THE HALL OF FAME CAREER OF **MIGUEL COTTO** IN FOCUS

By **Doug Fischer**

If you ask Miguel Cotto to sum up his 17-year professional boxing career, he'll flatly tell you, "I worked hard and I tried to do my best."

He's not wrong, but a matter-of-fact statement like that doesn't do justice to his legacy. Cotto, who says he will retire from the combat side of the sport after his Dec. 2 fight with Sadam Ali at Madison Square Garden, never gave sportswriters much to work with in terms of what came out of his mouth.

What he did with his hands, however, is another story.

If you ask *us* to sum up his career, we can be even more laconic than Cotto himself, offering just one word of praise and celebration from his home culture: "Wepa!"

The 2000 Olympian from Puerto Rico always delivered for the fans, and for boxing photographers he was pure gold. As stoic and guarded as Cotto often seemed outside of the ring, the four-division titleholder gave his soul inside the ropes.

Nobody was closer to the blood, sweat and tears Cotto shed than ringside photographers, who witnessed the fierce shootouts, the grueling battles of attrition, the masterful boxing clinics, the struggles, the crushing defeats and the comeback victories that distinguished the Caguas native's career.

So what better way to pay homage to Cotto's dramatic legacy than with images from three of the boxing industry's most decorated photographers – Chris Farina, Naoki Fukuda and Tom Hogan.

The editors of THE RING asked them to pick out their favorite photos of Cotto and tell us why those images resonate with them. Though respected and admired by fans, especially those of Puerto Rican descent, Cotto wasn't as beloved as other boxing heroes from that island, such as Felix Trinidad and Wilfredo Gomez. Some say Cotto's perceived emotional "coldness" is a reason for this.

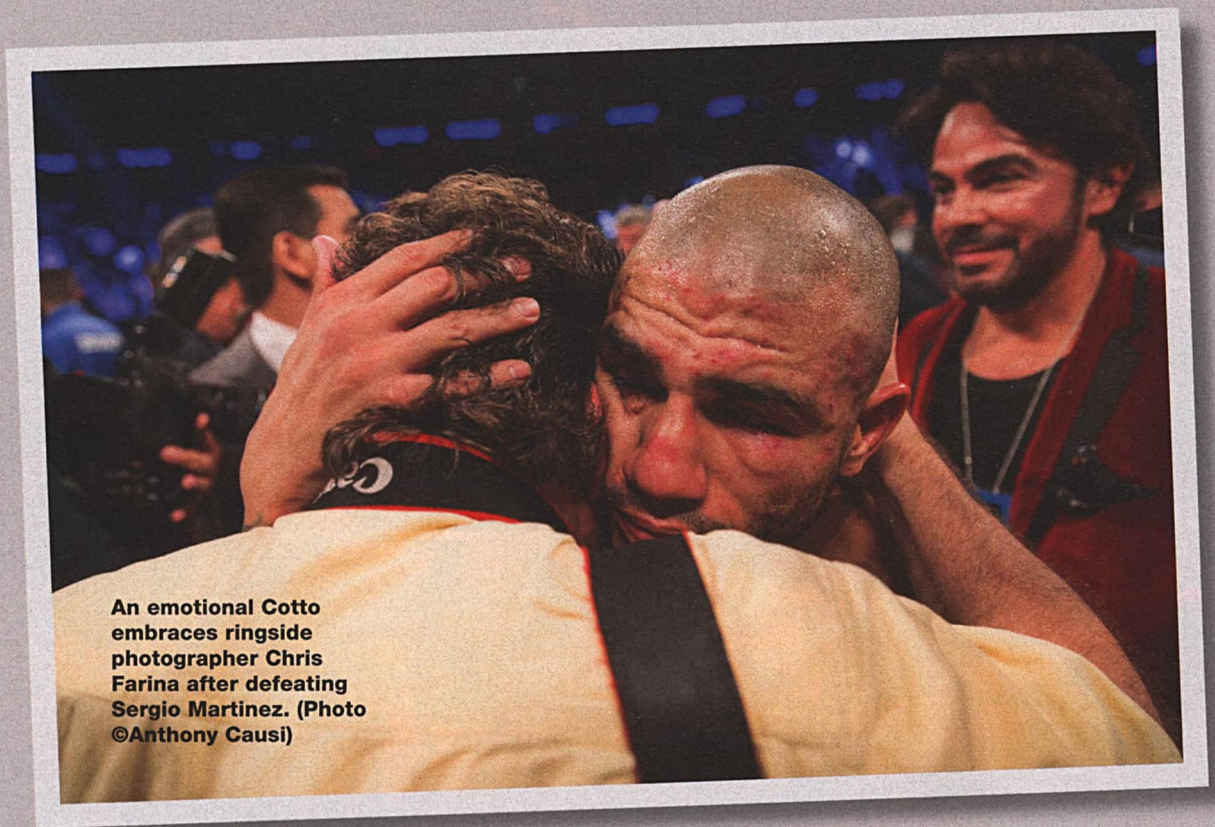
However, all three photographers described Cotto as one of their all-time favorites, and each expressed an emotional attachment to the fighter.

"Photographing fighters like Cotto transcends going to work," said Farina.

"It becomes more than a job, because of the relationship that's forged with them. You become attached to them, you feel for them, and it makes your work better. It's a very special bond and it's wonderful. It goes beyond the money you make or the recognition you get from the photos being published.

"People think Cotto is this cold guy, but he's not. One of the most special moments of my career was after he beat (Sergio) Martinez. He found me at ringside, grabs me, gives me a hug, kisses me on the cheek and says, 'Thank you.' He did that because I had been there throughout his career, witnessed the ups and downs, and there's trust between us. A lot of what we do comes from building trust with the people we photograph.

"I feel privileged to have been a part of Cotto's ride. Picking out just a few photos from his career was almost impossible because he gave us so many memories." »



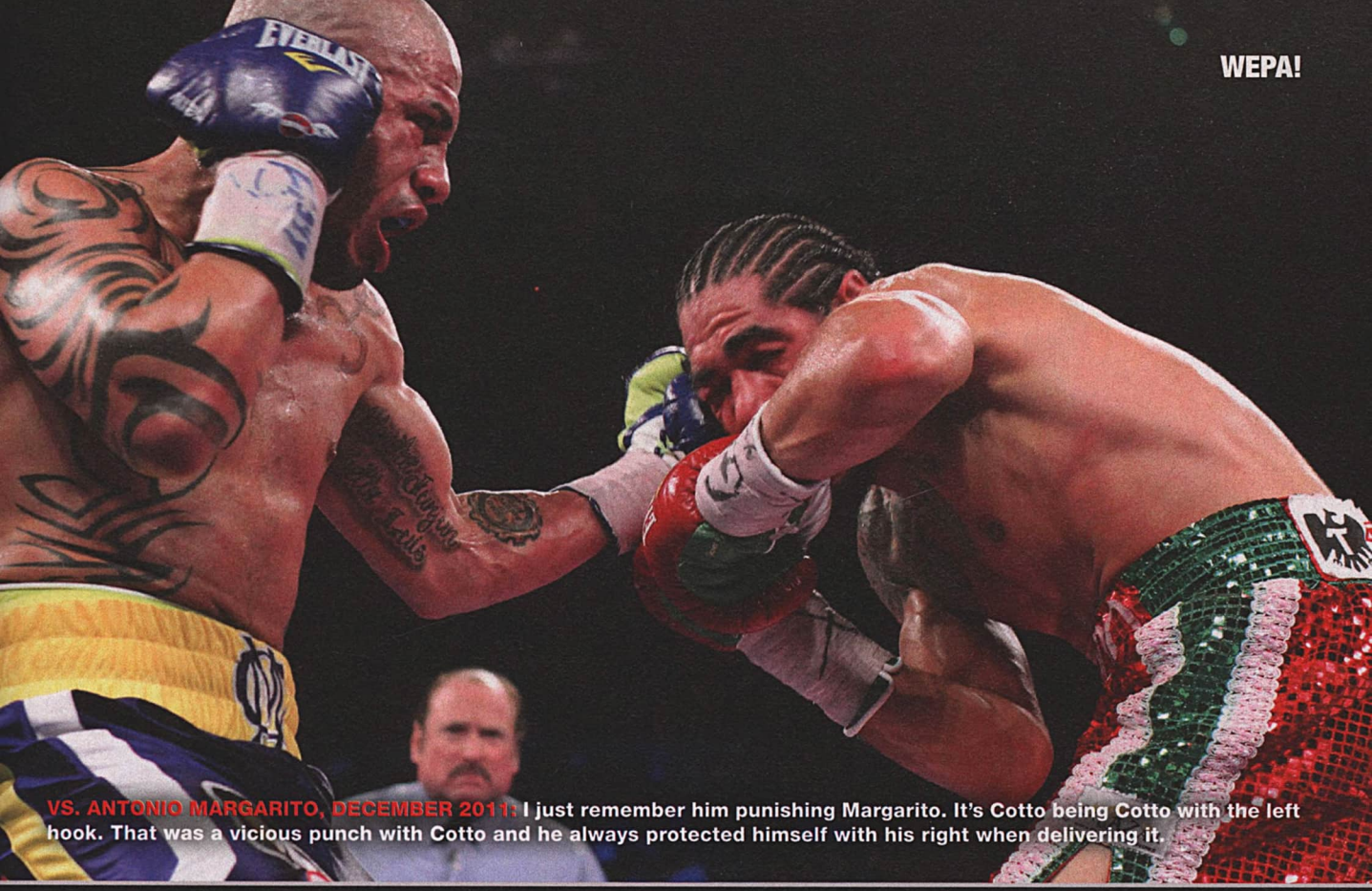
An emotional Cotto embraces ringside photographer Chris Farina after defeating Sergio Martinez. (Photo ©Anthony Causi)

Chris Farina

An award-winning photojournalist who has covered boxing since 1985, Farina was the official photographer for Top Rank, Inc., from 1989-2015, during which time he chronicled the careers of such future hall of famers as Michael Carbajal, Oscar De La Hoya, Floyd Mayweather Jr. and Cotto.

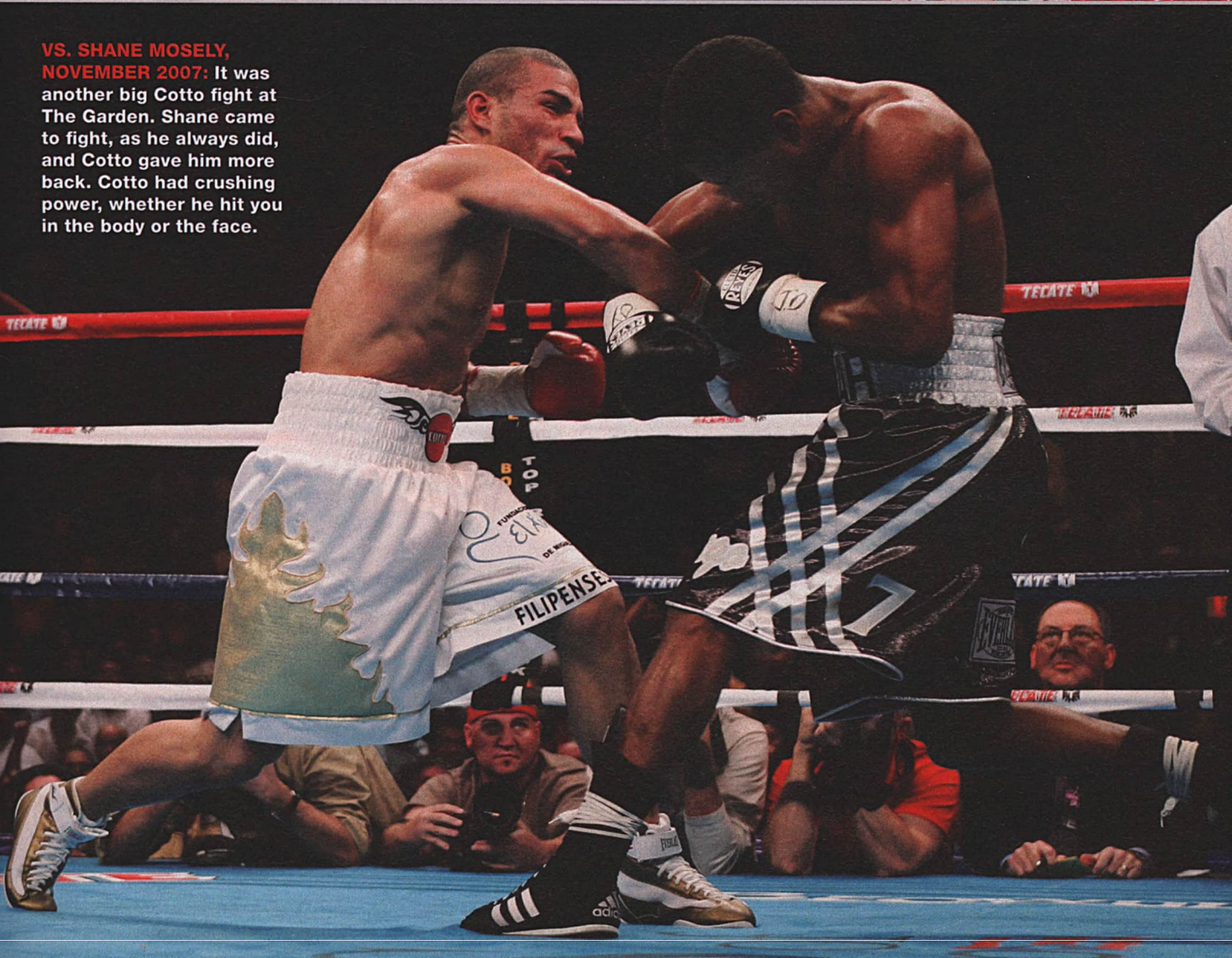
WITH EMANUEL STEWARD THE WEEK OF THE YURI FOREMAN FIGHT, JUNE 2010: Hand-wrapping shots are cliché, but this one was special because Cotto had tremendous admiration for Emanuel. The look he's giving Emanuel is that he was listening and that he had great respect for his new trainer. There was a fatherly look from Steward.

VS. SERGIO MARTINEZ, JUNE 2014: This is my favorite shot from the Martinez fight. I don't know if anyone else got this exact moment in the fight. It happened so quick, I had a split second to capture that image, which was the story of the fight – it wasn't even competitive. Fighters don't usually land flat like that. I was worried about Martinez. I thought maybe he broke his neck.



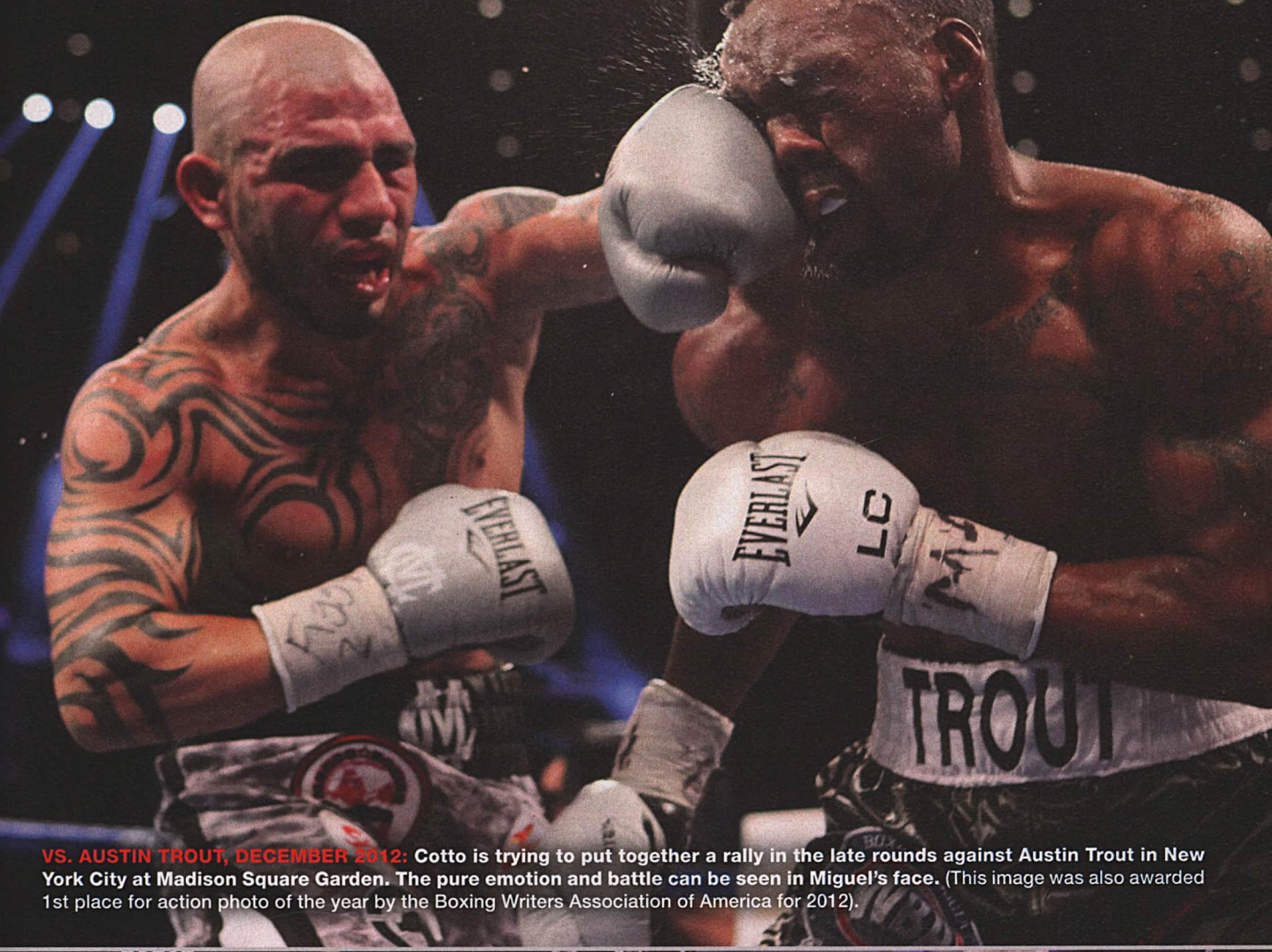
VS. ANTONIO MARGARITO, DECEMBER 2011: I just remember him punishing Margarito. It's Cotto being Cotto with the left hook. That was a vicious punch with Cotto and he always protected himself with his right when delivering it.

VS. SHANE MOSELY, NOVEMBER 2007: It was another big Cotto fight at The Garden. Shane came to fight, as he always did, and Cotto gave him more back. Cotto had crushing power, whether he hit you in the body or the face.



Tom Hogan
Hogan has collected nine Boxing Writers Association of America awards during his 22 years in the boxing business. He's been the official photographer for Golden Boy Promotions since 2007, and for GGG/K2 Promotions and Roc Nation Boxing since 2015.

VS. VICTORIANO SOSA, FEBRUARY 2004: Cotto was still climbing the ranks and fighting on Top Rank undercards when he knocked out Victoriano Sosa in Las Vegas but I like this photo because it shows his emotion after an impressive victory.



VS. AUSTIN TROUT, DECEMBER 2012: Cotto is trying to put together a rally in the late rounds against Austin Trout in New York City at Madison Square Garden. The pure emotion and battle can be seen in Miguel's face. (This image was also awarded 1st place for action photo of the year by the Boxing Writers Association of America for 2012).

IN LOCKER ROOM BEFORE YOSHIHIRO KAMEGAI FIGHT, AUGUST 2017: I like this shot of Miguel in the locker room before his war with Yoshihiro Kamegai because it shows you a contrast between a warrior in the ring who's comfortable with his family before entering the ring. Everyone is relaxed, comfortable and happy to be together. I have been in many locker rooms before big fights and this one had a great family vibe.

Naoki Fukuda

Fukuda, who was introduced to the sport as an amateur boxer and as a writer for Japan's *Boxing Magazine* while still a college student in 1988, has become one of the most prolific boxing photographers of the past quarter century. The nine-time BWAA award winner has shot an average of 400 fights per year for the past 15 years.

VS. ZAB JUDAH, JUNE 2007: Cotto beat Judah in a dramatic fight. During this time, he was in his golden age. This event was very exciting because both fighters were popular in New York City.

VS. RICARDO MAYORGA, MARCH 2011: This is a scene from the weigh-in for his fight with Ricardo Mayorga. Mayorga has provoked Cotto, who was on the scale. ...

... But Cotto's uncluttered mind and poker face ...

... are his strengths.

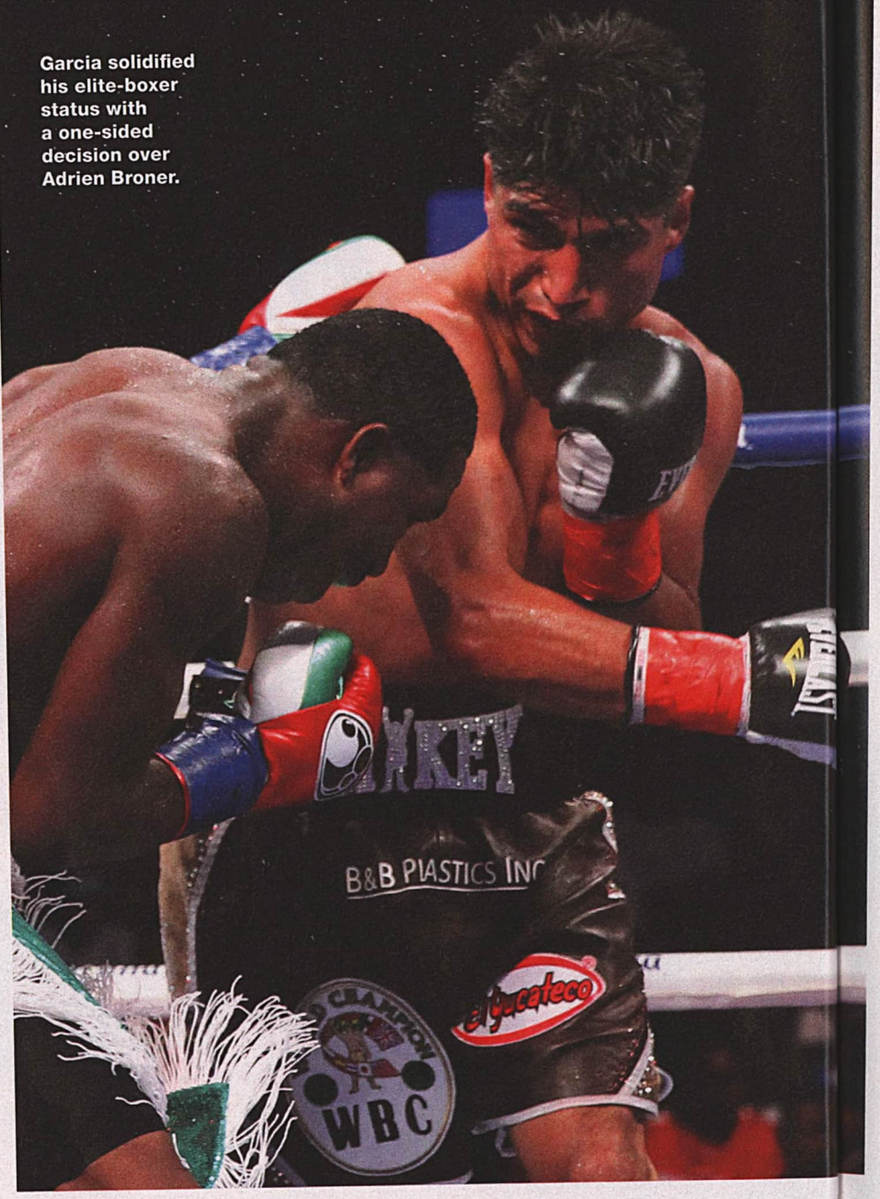
GOING SOLO

MIKEY GARCIA WANTS BIG FIGHTS, BUT HE DOESN'T WANT TO BE TIED DOWN BY ANY ONE PROMOTER. IS FREE AGENCY WORKING FOR HIM?

By **Steve Kim**

Mikey Garcia was sidelined for more than two of the prime years of his career – from the start of 2014, after he outpointed Juan Carlos Burgos in January, until the summer of 2016, when he returned to knock out Elio Rojas in five rounds – while he was embroiled in a legal dispute with his promoter at the time, Top Rank.

After the HBO-televised decision over Burgos in The Theater at Madison Square Garden, Top Rank attempted to make a fight between Garcia and Yuriorkis Gamboa. However, Garcia – who at that time was being groomed to eventually face



Garcia solidified his elite-boxer status with a one-sided decision over Adrien Broner.

Manny Pacquiao – balked at having to sign a contract extension with the company.

Long and drawn-out litigation followed as Garcia's burgeoning career went dormant. Potential fights fell by the wayside and untold millions in purse money were lost. Through it all, Garcia remained steadfast and principled in his stance.

But where he stood was at the center of a dilemma faced by any fighter contemplating free agency. On one hand, there's something fundamentally attractive about controlling one's own destiny and pursuing a career with no strings attached, especially for somebody as talented as Garcia. On the other hand, the most successful boxing careers are steered by promoters who understandably want to protect their interests through the use of contracts. So, which is the better path in the end?

When he finally returned to the ring in 2016, Garcia had become a featured performer on Showtime under the guidance of adviser Al Haymon and the umbrella of the Premier Boxing Champions organization. After defeating Rojas, Garcia knocked out Dejan Zlaticanin in January 2017 to capture the WBC lightweight title. As he waited for his next assignment, perhaps getting a bit antsy over his career direction, Garcia met with the brass at Golden Boy Promotions, who were interested in representing him.

"He actually came to see us; he requested to meet about promoting him," recalled Eric Gomez, the president of Golden Boy Promotions. However, a fight was eventually scheduled for Garcia by PBC – against Adrien Broner on July 29 at Barclays Center in Brooklyn, New York, and televised by Showtime.

After defeating Broner in conclusive fashion over 12 rounds, Garcia's brother and co-trainer, Robert Garcia, made it known in various interviews that they were displeased with how they were treated during the event. The former 130-pound beltholder stated that perhaps it was time that his younger brother got a full-time dedicated promoter working for him. PBC events are assigned to various promoters who have no vested interest in boxers like Garcia.

"He fought Broner and then shortly after that he requested to come and see us," said Gomez. "(He was interested in) doing a promotional agreement with us."

A few days after Miguel Cotto won the vacant WBO 154-pound title by outclassing Yoshihiro Kamegai, Garcia took to his Twitter account to challenge the Puerto Rican star to a December showdown. Garcia, who has never fought above 140 pounds, made it clear that he wanted to fight the future Hall of Famer at junior middleweight. The chutzpah of Garcia's dare made waves on social media and among hardcore boxing fans, but wasn't taken seriously by Golden Boy or HBO.

That is until the night of Sept. 16, when middleweight champions Gennady Golovkin and Canelo Alvarez fought to a disputed draw that begged for an immediate rematch. Cotto – who was hoping to perhaps get a crack at the winner in early December – was suddenly in need of an opponent.

As crazy as the Cotto-Garcia matchup seemed considering the weight disparity, the two sides talked and Gomez believed at one point he was on the verge of making the fight a reality.

But there was one catch.

The deal also included a three-fight option on Garcia held by Golden Boy that would potentially include fights against the likes of RING lightweight champ Jorge Linares and welterweight standout Lucas Matthysse.

And for someone who sacrificed so much for his independence and to not be tied down long-term, this was a deal-breaker. Garcia wrote on Twitter, "So the fight only came by signing to Golden Boy. Not bad but I'm doing better on my own."

He added, "Why not Cotto and only (Cotto) and no further commitment? I would have taken it if it was Cotto only.

"I would take Cotto by itself. Or Cotto and Linares only. But Golden Boy said they can't do that."

[Editor's note: Garcia and his brother both declined to speak to THE RING for this story.]

Garcia believes that by remaining a free agent he not only maximizes his options, but also perhaps his bargaining leverage, as he could theoretically put his fights up to the highest bidder the way Sugar Ray Leonard did during in his heyday in the 1980s. However, it has to be pointed out that Leonard – who entered the pro ranks as a star after winning a gold medal on primetime television at the 1976 Olympic Games – was a legitimate attraction and fought in an era when boxing was much more than just a niche sport.

Garcia, who is currently one of the game's master craftsmen, has failed to resonate with the general public.

But Gomez wanted to be clear: "We always talked about a (long-term) promotional contract with (Garcia) – since day one. Cotto was never even a factor until after Canelo and Golovkin fought. The deal included financial minimums and a time frame on the future fights.

"Everything was there," Gomez continued. "He was willing to do the fight. He called me and said 'I'm all for it. I love it. I want to do it.' (But) for some reason he changed his mind the same day he told me he wanted to do the deal."

While Garcia believes remaining independent is the ideal situation for him, Gomez, naturally, believes that boxers are better served with dedicated promoters who have a real stake in their clients.

"I think they need a promoter. I think it's very important to get a promoter behind them, someone who's going to build them. Not only for fights. Someone who's going to promote them throughout the year, get them on talk shows, get them to be relevant," Gomez said. "When they just do one-offs, then what's happening is that the promoters just promote their fights, but they have no incentive to build them into a commodity, to build them into a brand and get their names out there."

Gomez believes there is more to promoting than just staging the actual fights.

"There's so many things a promoter can do to help build you, and it's not just your boxing career. It's outside of boxing as well," he said.

It should be noted that the two biggest stars in the sport today, Anthony Joshua and Alvarez, have full-time promoters. Joshua, the IBF and WBA heavyweight titleholder, is represented by Matchroom Boxing, and Alvarez is promoted by Golden Boy.

As the Cotto saga came to an end, both Garcia and Linares were angling for a unification bout with then-WBO lightweight beltholder Terry Flanagan. But Flanagan decided to vacate the belt and move up to junior welterweight, which left both Garcia and Linares needing a meaningful fight for the beginning of 2018.

Once again, Garcia took to Twitter to call out Linares. Gomez jumped in with a tweet of his own aimed at Garcia: "If you are serious about wanting to fight (Jorge Linares) call me. No options, no extra fights. Straight up. #noexcuses."

Garcia re-entered discussions with Golden Boy. The deal for Linares was a one-off and a 50-50 financial split between the two fighters, and it stipulated that broadcast rights would go to the highest bidder, whether it be HBO or Showtime. Golden Boy only insisted on being the lead promoter of the event. However, Garcia was offered a Jan. 27 date on Showtime and reportedly promised a significant opponent and payday by Haymon, and decided to go that direction.

"I have more options," Garcia told ESPN Deportes in early November. "In fact, compared to what I (was offered for Linares), the guaranteed purse is better (for Jan. 27). Although the fight with Linares – I would love to do very much. But we must take into account the business side of things. ... Just as Golden Boy is looking to do what's best for their company, I am also looking to do what's best for me."

At press time, it was not clear who Garcia will face. The name of IBF lightweight titleholder Robert Easter has been prominently mentioned.

But, for the fourth consecutive fight, Garcia will be performing on Showtime and under the PBC banner against an opponent that has been approved for him by Haymon.

So just how much of a "free agent" is he?

Garcia won't be facing the fighter most fans want to see him share the ring with – Linares, a fellow three-division titleholder who is as respected at lightweight as he is – but he's getting what he wants, which is the right to choose.

However, given his contentious history with Top Rank and the difficulty of his on-and-off negotiations with Golden Boy, major promotions may choose the right to avoid Garcia, which will limit his opportunity to take part in significant matchups and high-profile events.

But it's Garcia's career, and he's sacrificed a lot to be in control of it. Ultimately, he's the one who has to live with his decisions.

Oleksandr Usyk confirmed his status as the man to beat by dismantling Marco Huck.

TOURNAMENT TRIUMPH

THE WORLD BOXING SUPER SERIES PROMISED TO GIVE BOXING A SHOT OF ADRENALINE – AND SO FAR HAS DELIVERED

By **Tom Gray**

OK! Trivia time: Other than being former world champions, what do Jimmy Ellis, Mike Tyson, Bernard Hopkins and Andre Ward have in common?

Think fast. Time's up.

All four men won a tournament during their respective careers, of course. No, seriously, if you got that answer immediately, then you're an unapologetic boxing geek and God bless you.

In 1968, Ellis prevailed in an eight-man elimination tournament for the WBA heavyweight title, which had been stripped from Muhammad Ali when the lineal champ refused induction to the U.S. Army. Two decades later, a peak Tyson decimated a division to win HBO's heavyweight unification series. In 2001, Hopkins claimed the top prize in HBO's middleweight version. And, in 2011, Ward reigned supreme in Showtime's Super Six World Boxing Classic, a round-robin style super middleweight tournament.

Of course, there have been other tournaments, but it's difficult to think of one that got off to as fabulous a start as the double-division World Boxing Super Series. We've had one-punch knockouts, shock results, career-best wins and stunning performances. Is this new format destined to become the benchmark? Could the WBSS change the face of the sport worldwide?

The semifinals of the WBSS are due to commence in early 2018, so the following is a retrospective analysis on what we've seen so far. Who prevailed? Who looked better than we thought? Who have we overestimated? Who should be favored to win the coveted Muhammad Ali trophy and collect the lion's share of the prize money?

CRUISERWEIGHT

Oleksandr Usyk TKO 10 Marco Huck • Date/location: Sept. 9, 2017/ Max Schmeling Halle, Prenzlauer Berg, Germany

He came, he saw and he kicked Huck's ass. In the maiden bout of the WBSS, Usyk, the consensus best cruiserweight on the planet, showed us exactly why he's favored to win the entire tournament. Making the third defense of his WBO title, Usyk fought to entertain the crowd, enhancing an already formidable reputation with a brutal and efficient performance. Huck, a former long-reigning titleholder at cruiserweight, put forth a gallant effort, but he couldn't put a dent in the unbeaten Ukrainian. Any time Huck got too brave, Usyk put him back in the box with blazing multi-punch flurries

out of the southpaw stance. One such attack in the 10th forced referee Robert Byrd to rescue the Germany-based Serbian, who was being battered from pillar to post. "I promised that it was going to be a very spectacular fight," said Usyk in his post-fight interview. "I never promised to finish it inside the distance, but what I did is what I did. I have no preferences about who I face next. I just want to box. I need good opposition to be a good fighter." Humble words from the 30-year-old Usyk, who continues to improve with each appearance.

★★★

Yunier Dorticos TKO 2 Dmitry Kudryashov • Date/location: Sept. 23, 2017/Alamodome, San Antonio, Texas

There's an old axiom in the sweet science that tells you to box a fighter or fight a boxer. Don't tell that to Dorticos, who fought fire with fire to produce what was arguably the most devastating display of the WBSS so far. Kudryashov was an authentic knockout puncher with a fearsome reputation, but he had been stopped once before, by Olanrewaju Durodola in 2015. Dorticos, who had knocked out 20 of 21 opponents himself, was confident that he could end the Russian hitter's night early – and he was right. After outboxing Kudryashov in the opening session, the unbeaten Cuban star dropped his man with a double one-two in the second round. The final right hand landed flush on the side of the head and Kudryashov was counted out. "I knew that he was going to come at me, and I waited and delivered the shot," said Dorticos. "Once it landed, I knew it was over. I want to prove that I am the best cruiserweight in the world right now." He's off to a good start. And with this type of hitting power, Dorticos is a threat to anyone. Kudryashov needed 10 minutes to recover, not 10 seconds.

★★★

Mairis Briedis UD 12 Mike Perez • Date/location: Sept. 30, 2017/Arena Riga, Riga, Latvia

This was an interesting fight going in. Perez had shown promise as a 235-plus pound heavyweight, but a pair of defeats, first by split decision to Bryant Jennings and then by stunning first-round knockout to Alexander Povetkin, forced the Ireland-based Cuban to diet his way down to cruiserweight. The leaner Perez knocked out the unbeaten Victor Biscak with a single punch in less than 30 seconds before entering the WBSS. Briedis, a powerful 200-pounder from Latvia, had won the vacant WBC title by outpointing Huck in April and was making his first defense. As intriguing as the matchup was, however, the resulting action was a letdown. Briedis was cut by a clash of heads in Round 3 and Perez had a point deducted as per WBC rules. The defending titleholder landed most of the clean shots but he was anything but convincing. "It wasn't easy, but we did it," said Briedis. "There are still a lot of things to work on. This was the first title defense in Latvia and the first time I was cut. I'm looking forward to my semifinal." Full credit to the unbeaten Briedis if he is looking forward to his semifinal. Next up for him is Usyk.

★★★

Murat Gassiev KO 3 Krzysztof Wlodarczyk • Date/location: Oct. 21, 2017/Prudential Center, Newark, N.J.

Two elite fighters at opposite ends of their careers. The 36-year-old Wlodarczyk was a former two-time cruiserweight titleholder who had mixed with the best over the course of a 17-year professional career. Gassiev, the IBF titleholder, was 12 years younger and approaching his peak. Straight out of the gate, Wlodarczyk seemed reluctant to engage. The unbeaten Gassiev cut the ring off with ease and impressively varied up his offense. In the third round, Wlodarczyk retreated to the ropes and Gassiev pursued, splitting the Pole's guard with a left uppercut to the head before switching immediately to the body with a left hook. It was a fight-ender delivered with world-class precision, and Wlodarczyk was done. "I had a great opponent tonight. I prepared myself for a tough fight, but it is boxing and anything can happen," said Gassiev. "We do a lot of work in the gym, and I just listened to my coach round after round, and he told me what I needed to do. That's all I needed." This victory set up a mouth-watering semifinal clash with Dorticos, who was ringside in New Jersey. As cruiserweight world title fights go, it doesn't get much better.

SUPER MIDDLEWEIGHT

Callum Smith UD 12 Erik Skoglund • Date/location: Sept. 16, 2017/Echo Arena, Liverpool, England

The pressure was on for Smith, and it perhaps contributed to a less-than-stellar performance. The tournament favorite, who was coming off a nine-month layoff, brought the WBSS circus to his home city and was eager

to put on a show. He got off to a good start, but slowly the unheralded Skoglund began to battle back. In the middle rounds, the unbeaten Swede controlled time and distance with steady lateral movement and a brisk jab. Smith would have to adapt if he wanted to maintain his lead, and that's exactly what he did. The English boxer-puncher threaded home a right-hand counter in the 11th and forced the visitor to take a knee. It was just what Smith needed; his semifinal spot was secure. "Apart from one or two rounds, I felt comfortable and thought I deserved it," said Smith. "I always said I was the better man, better technically and people would see a side of me they haven't seen. I have just beaten a very good fighter on the back foot, using my skills, and showed again that late in a fight, I've still got power." The scoring was a touch wide at 117-110, 117-111 and 116-112.

★★★

Chris Eubank Jr. KO 3 Avni Yildirim • Date/location: Oct. 7, 2017/Hanns-Martin-Schleyer Halle, Stuttgart, Germany

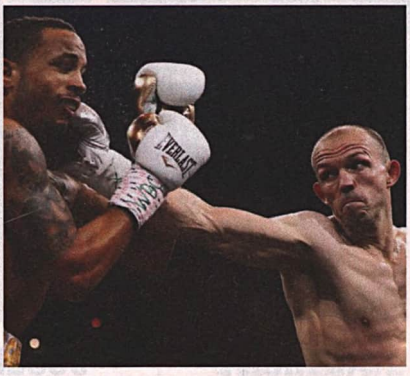
The fireworks started early in this one. Yildirim's manager, Ahmet Oner, attempted to pick a fight with a member of Team Eubank at the pre-fight press conference and when he didn't get one, he threatened to sleep with the man's wife. On fight night, the only person sleeping was Yildirim, and his management didn't know where to look. Eubank, in only his third fight at 168 pounds, decked the previously unbeaten Turk with a right uppercut in the opening round and closed the show with a highlight-reel left hook in the third. The Englishman was punch-perfect and this was arguably a career-best performance. Indeed, it was so convincing that the pendulum swung for a lot of fans who now believe Eubank should be favored to win the entire tournament. Time will tell, but the fighter known as "Next Gen" remains as confident as ever. "I'm here to dominate this tournament," said the 28-year-old Eubank. "I'm sending a message out there that I'm coming. George Groves, get through your next fight so we can give the boxing fans what they want to see. I think it's going to be exactly the same as what we saw tonight. I'm not playing anymore."

★★★

George Groves KO 4 Jamie Cox • Date/location: Oct. 14, 2017/Wembley Arena, London

When Groves selected Cox as his quarterfinal opponent in Monaco, the latter's camp whooped and hollered. And for three rounds, Team Cox had reason to be happy. This all-England affair had a touch of spice because both men had known each other from their amateur days. The southpaw Cox was a big underdog, but there were a few insiders who thought he might be in the right place at the right time. However, Groves, the only titleholder (WBA) in the super middleweight tournament, was the bigger man and the more seasoned professional. Ultimately, that proved to be decisive. In the fourth, Groves picked a beautiful right-hand counter to the body and Cox went down. There wasn't enough time for the stricken fighter to refill his lungs with air and he was counted out. "I didn't want an easy fight and I knew Jamie was tough," said Groves. "I was landing big body shots and you can't keep giving me a target to the body, because I might get you down and you might not get up. A lot was made of the size difference in this fight and I knew Jamie couldn't beat me. The same goes for Eubank; he's not big enough."

★★★



Juergen Braehmer UD 12 Rob Brant • Date/location: Oct. 27, 2017/Sport and Congress Center, Schwerin, Germany

Braehmer, a former WBO light heavyweight titleholder, had a lot to overcome. The crafty German southpaw was 39 years old, he was coming off a loss, he had been inactive for over a year and he was making super middleweight for the first time in a decade. All of that and he was going in against an unbeaten American who appeared to be loaded with confidence. None of that mattered. Turning in a boxing clinic that belied his years, Braehmer knocked off the rust in the opening seconds and then knocked Brant all over the ring for 12 rounds. The jab worked wonders and was crucial in setting up the former titleholder's sharp lefts to the head and body. Brant had his moments but they were few and far between, as evidenced by the scoring: 119-109, 118-110 and 116-112. "I showed what I can do at 39 years of age," said Braehmer, who will face Callum Smith in the other semifinal. "I had to work really hard to come back from injuries. I had problems with my back and a muscle tear. Doctors told me I would have to work very hard to come back, and that's what I did." RING

Tom Gray is the associate editor for THE RING. Follow him on Twitter: @Tom_Gray_Boxing.

Some things are sure things. We've nailed several predictions here in years past. It's relatively easy to forecast accurately when the radar shows what's coming. We can see prospects on their way up and has-beens on their way out. We see storylines coming together, trends taking shape and obstacles that are in the way.

Some of our predictions for 2018 are based on confirmed facts. Others are merely educated guesses. Stay tuned for our thoughts on how the year will shake out, where we're headed – and what will have you shaking your head.

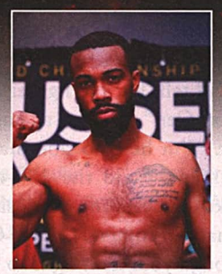
10 THINGS WE'LL SEE IN 2018...

ANTHONY JOSHUA VS. DEONTAY WILDER

The best heavyweights in the U.K. and U.S. know it's time to collide and decide the best heavyweight in the world. Even though Joshua can draw more than 70,000 against the likes of **Carlos Takam**, he's striving for legacy and superstardom beyond the fame that came when he stopped **Wladimir Klitschko**. Wilder, meanwhile, has been ready to prove himself against top opponents for some time but keeps having those opponents test positive for banned substances. Wilder was willing to travel to Russia for **Alexander Povetkin**. He'll cross the pond for this. The only obstacle is a deal that appeals to both.

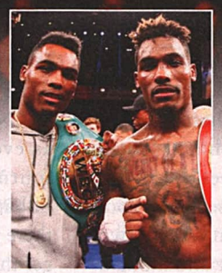
JOSEPH PARKER GOING OUT WITH A WHIMPER

The odd man out of the aforementioned scenario is **Joseph Parker.** That's fine. It's clear he doesn't belong. Parker was once mentioned in the same breath as Anthony Joshua when both were up-and-coming prospects. Parker has clearly reached his ceiling. He struggled to win a vacant title, taking a majority decision over tubby **Andy Ruiz**. His second defense was underwhelming – a victory over Hughie Fury this past September. The rest of the heavyweight division doesn't have much to offer. It's nonetheless hard to see Parker holding on for much longer.



GARY RUSSELL JR. MAKING HIS ANNUAL APPEARANCE

The featherweight titleholder fought once apiece in 2015, 2016 and 2017. We'll have to begin celebrating his appearances as a novelty, like Groundhog Day. There are two big differences between Russell and **Punxsutawney Phil,** however. Russell actually has talent. The groundhog has far more people who care about him. If that sounds harsh, it's still true. Russell has superb hand speed, power and ability, and he cares enough about the sport that he wants nothing more than to avenge his sole defeat at the hands of **Vasyl Lomachenko**. But he's a forgettable figure the other 364 days of the year. Even **Al Haymon** is pushing a **Leo Santa Cruz-Abner Mares** rematch while Russell just sits on the sideline.

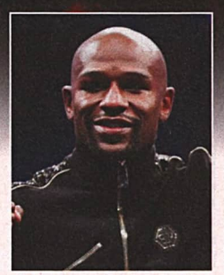


THE CONTINUED RISE OF THE CHARLO BROTHERS

There's no better time to push **Jermall and Jermell Charlo** than now – while the iron is hot. Jermall impressively stopped highly touted contender Julian Williams at 154 pounds and then moved up to 160 to take out **Jorge Heiland.** Jermell dropped jaws when he knocked out unbeaten prospect **Erickson Lubin** with one punch in one round. There are good reasons why the power-punching twins were brought to Brooklyn for a press conference the November weekend of Deontay Wilder's rematch with Bermane Stiverne and why Showtime featured them on-air during the broadcast. They are talented fighters with outsized personalities. Expect to see and hear a lot from them in 2018.

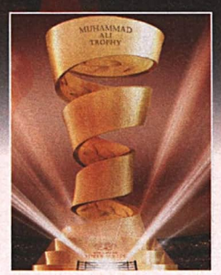
ADALAIDE BYRD JUDGING ANOTHER HIGH-PROFILE BOXING MATCH

Byrd long had a reputation for turning in scorecards that ranged from questionable to outright outrageous. Her bungling of **Canelo Alvarez vs. Gennady Golovkin** – which she somehow saw 118-110 for Canelo – shouldn't have been a surprise. It also shouldn't be tolerated. But apparently Byrd won't be going the way of fellow infamous judge **C.J. Ross**, who was exiled after her 114-114 card for **Floyd Mayweather Jr.** vs. Alvarez. Byrd was ringside again barely a month after the Canelo-GGG debacle. It was a small card, but it was a sign that the decision-makers in Nevada are as bad at judging competency as Byrd is at judging boxing.



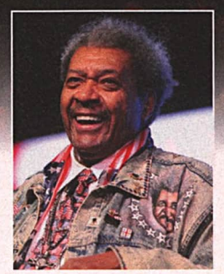
FLOYD MAYWEATHER JR.'S "RECORD" BEING BROKEN

First, let's get this out of the way: **Floyd Mayweather** moving to 50-0 and passing Rocky Marciano's 49-0 mark didn't mean as much as some tried to claim. Marciano's record applied to retiring as the heavyweight champion. Several smaller fighters made it past that number, including a guy you might've heard of named **Julio Cesar Chavez**. The next one will be among the smallest: **Chayaphon Moonsri** (aka Wanheng Menayothin), a strawweight titleholder who had an inflated 49-0 record as of late November following a unanimous decision over Tatsuya Fukuhara. Moonsri fought five times in 2017. He'll be well beyond Mayweather when 2018 ends.



BOTH CLARITY AND STABILITY IN THE CRUISERWEIGHT DIVISION

There won't be any doubt about who the best cruiserweight is once the **World Boxing Super Series** wraps. The opening round bouts are done, and the four semifinalists include three titleholders – **Mairis Briedis, Murat Gassiev and Oleksandr Usyk** – plus top contender **Yunier Dorticos**. (The remaining belt belongs to **Denis Lebedev**, whom Gassiev defeated in late 2016.) That means the tournament winner will be the undisputed champ. Unlike so many past cruiserweight kings, expect this one to stick around rather than head one division north, expanding his legacy by defending against any new challengers who rise to the occasion.



THE LAST OF DON KING

King was once a fixture, then a novelty, now just a shell of the dominant force he used to be. His demise has been predicted time and again. The 86-year-old has few fighters and even less influence. His former heavyweight titleholder, **Bermane Stiverne**, was embarrassingly blasted out by **Deontay Wilder** in just a single round. King does have **Amir Imam**, who lost to **Adrian Granados** in 2015 but is somehow part of a mini-tournament for the WBC's junior welterweight title. That field also includes **Viktor Postol** and **Regis Prograis**. Once Imam goes down, expect King to sadly do the same soon thereafter.

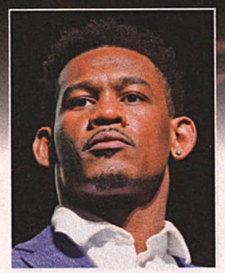
HBO THROWING ANYTHING IT CAN AGAINST THE WALL TO SEE WHAT STICKS

HBO used to have the best fighters and the biggest shows. Now instead of building legends one round at a time, the network is rebuilding its roster, desperately seeking new stars in an era when **Al Haymon**'s vast stable is almost exclusively featured elsewhere and Top Rank's talent has moved over to ESPN. That's why HBO aired a patchwork October card featuring **Jezreel Corrales** losing his 130-pound title and **Demetrius Andrade** debuting up at middleweight, plus tape-delayed footage of a bantamweight unification fight in Northern Ireland. Current projects include featuring **Dmitry Bivol** as a potential future star at 175 and pushing the talented 115-pound division. This is a transition period. Some of this will stink. But some of it will stick.

DELIGHTFUL LIGHT HEAVYWEIGHT MAYHEM

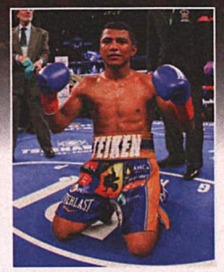
So much attention over the years went to the disappointing lack of a fight between **Adonis Stevenson** and **Sergey Kovalev**. Then came the debate following the two fights between Kovalev and **Andre Ward**. Now that Ward has retired, his four vacant world titles (including the RING championship) open up a lot of opportunity at 175. The light heavyweight division now features **Eleider Alvarez, Artur Beterbiev, Dmitry Bivol, Marcus Browne, Oleksandr Gvozdyk** and **Badou Jack**. **Sullivan Barrera** thinks he fits in the picture. Kovalev is starting over again. Stevenson will finally be facing a real challenge as well. And several of the above contenders will be facing each other in order to stand out from the pack.

10 THINGS WE WON'T SEE IN 2018...



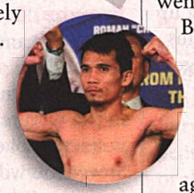
DANIEL JACOBS TAKING ON THE WORLD'S BEST MIDDLEWEIGHTS

Jacobs already had one shot, losing to **Gennady Golovkin** in March 2017. He deserves another. The fight with GGG was close on the official scorecards, and some unofficial observers believed that Jacobs actually deserved the decision. Jacobs' unfinished business with Golovkin will have to wait. We'll most likely see a rematch between Golovkin and Canelo Alvarez in 2018. Don't expect the winner to face "Miracle Man" immediately afterward. Jacobs is at least in a better position now that he's signed with HBO. The network will spotlight him and make sure his next shot will be a bigger event than his last one.

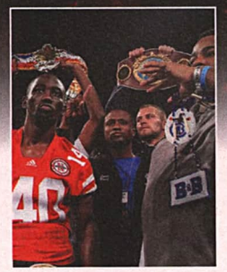


ROMAN GONZALEZ RETURNING TO THE TOP AT JUNIOR BANTAMWEIGHT

"Chocolatito" lived up to the standards we have for the best boxers in the world and then was brought down by trying to do too much. Gonzalez was great at 105, 108 and 112 and was able to win a close fight over one of the best at 115, **Carlos Cuadras**. Many will argue Gonzalez also deserved a decision over **Wisaksil Wangek** that instead went Wangek's way.

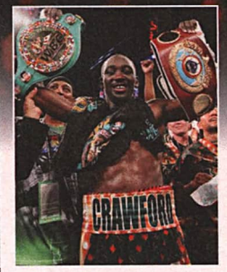


But an action-friendly style against bigger opponents meant he took more punishment against foes who could handle it better. Wangek knocked him out cold in the rematch, proving that even the greatest fighters have their limits. If he can rebound from this, it should be back at flyweight.



TERENCE CRAWFORD AGAINST THE BEST THAT 147 HAS TO OFFER

Crawford already laid the groundwork for his move from junior welterweight to welterweight, dropping all five of the world titles (including the RING championship) he won while cleaning up the 140-pound division. There are far more opportunities at 147 for the big fights he's long desired. He'll have to wait a little longer. The biggest bouts would be against fighters aligned with **Al Haymon**, and they are otherwise busy on routes already charted out for them. **Keith Thurman** is recovering from an injury and has **Shawn Porter** waiting for him, and then possibly **Errol Spence** afterward. Spence has **Lamont Peterson** in January. All of which is why we won't see the following...

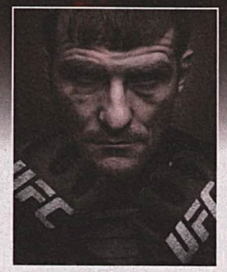


JEFF HORN ENDING THE YEAR WITH A WORLD TITLE

Horn's time as a titleholder is limited to as long as his team can milk 2017's shocking robbery win over **Manny Pacquiao**. It won't last. Horn is defending at home against fringe contender **Gary Corcoran** in December. He may well begin 2018 with a world title around his waist. He won't end the year that way. Horn is co-promoted by **Top Rank**, which would've wanted a Pacquiao rematch but will most likely make sure that Horn meets up with Crawford as soon as possible, setting up a **Crawford-Pacquiao** megafight that will give Pacquiao a nice golden parachute and set Crawford up for even bigger things to come in 2019.

CONOR MCGREGOR GIVING PAULIE MALIGNAGGI THE FIGHT HE WANTS

Malignaggi has tweeted about McGregor ever since the UFC star released a photo and brief video showing Malignaggi visiting the canvas during a sparring session ahead of McGregor's fight with **Floyd Mayweather Jr**. Malignaggi says the footage is misleading, that he was otherwise taking it to McGregor. He wants the full video released – and to prove his superiority in the ring. Neither will happen. There's nothing in it for McGregor. He's earned his huge payday. If McGregor ever boxes pro again, it won't come against a faded fighter who hung up his gloves after a KO loss to **Sam Eggington**.

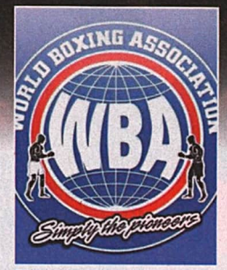


OTHER UFC STARS MAKING THE JUMP TO THE SWEET SCIENCE

It's alluring, given the money McGregor made this past August, and given that some UFC stars look at what they're earning in the Octagon and know they could earn more given the right fight in the squared circle. But McGregor made the money he made because of who he is and who his opponent was. That's also why the UFC ultimately relented and allowed the fight to happen. We won't see MMA's heavyweight king, **Stipe Miocic**, take on the likes of **Anthony Joshua** so long as Miocic is under contract. The UFC has too much to lose if it keeps sending its fighters over, well, to lose.

ADRIEN BRONER AT LAST LEARNING HIS LESSON

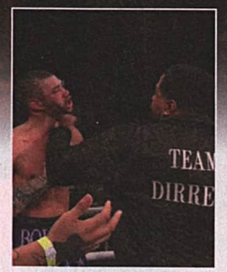
Might as well just keep putting this here until we're proven wrong.



THE WBA MAKING SIGNIFICANT PROGRESS ON ITS "FEWER TITLES" PLEDGE

A bit back, the **WBA** announced a plan to reduce its number of titleholders. On the surface, the sanctioning body seems as if it's nearly there – with just 25 super, regular and interim titleholders among the 17 divisions. But that number isn't what it seems. **Andre Ward** retired. **Terence Crawford** vacated all of his world titles.

Badou Jack, Demetrius Andrade and **Lamont Peterson** ditched their "regular" belts. Barring those events, the WBA would still have 30 titleholders, nearly two per division. That's still better than the 42 that existed at the end of 2015. It's no wonder why casual fans have so much difficulty following the sport.



MORE FIGHTS BETWEEN BOXERS AND THEIR OPPONENTS' TRAINERS

For the second straight year, we've seen a trainer sock a fighter after a bout was over. In 2016, it was **Albert Rivera** – who was in the corner of **Wilfredo Vazquez Jr.** – throwing down with **Juan Manuel Lopez** after Lopez scored a stoppage win. This year, it was **Leon Lawson** – chief second for nephew **Andre Dirrell** – sucker punching **Jose Uzcategui** after Dirrell was dropped by a late hit. At least Lopez and Rivera were able to turn something bad into something good, having an exhibition "rematch" for charity in 2017. Lawson needs to be banned from the sport. That'll help ensure nothing like this happens again.

A NEW HEAVYWEIGHT DIVISION

No, this wouldn't be the "super heavyweight" division occasionally bandied about thanks to the success of big men like the Klitschko brothers and **Anthony Joshua**.

Instead, this would be a place for the sheer number of heavyweights who've tested positive for banned substances. It won't happen, but hear me out. There's a lot of depth because there are a lot of dopes who've allegedly doped. The list includes **Alexander Povetkin, Luis Ortiz, Lucas Browne, Shannon Briggs, Andrzej Wawrzyk, Antonio Tarver** and **Erkan Teper**. That's seven boxers, just one short of a full tournament.

SHOWDOWN AT 154

Jermell Charlo has made a lot of statements over the last year and a half.

In May 2016, he knocked out John Jackson in eight rounds to win the WBC 154-pound title and joined his twin brother, Jermall, as dual beltholders in the same weight class.

Then it was a highlight-reel knockout of Charles Hatley, who was stiffened in Round 6 after serving Charlo with a heavy dose of pre-fight bravado.

But those outcomes paled in comparison to what Charlo had in store for Erickson Lubin, THE RING's 2016 Prospect of the Year, on Oct. 14.

In his most high-profile fight yet, the Houston native eviscerated the unbeaten

THE TALENT-HEAVY JUNIOR MIDDLEWEIGHT DIVISION IS RIPE FOR A WINNER-TAKE-ALL ROUND-ROBIN, AND SHOWTIME IS PUSHING FOR IT

By **Mike Coppinger**

Jermell Charlo (standing on the left) made a huge statement with his first-round "one-hitter-quitter" KO of Erickson Lubin.

22-year-old southpaw in a single round to officially put the junior middleweight division on notice. And after Lubin (a former top-rated U.S. amateur) crashed to the canvas, his legs and arms limp, Charlo didn't resort to the usual post-fight pleasantries.

No, the 27-year-old boxer-puncher, in line with what had been a trash-talk-filled promotion, boasted about his masterful work. It didn't sit well with some fans.

Charlo (30-0, 15 knockouts) may not be well-liked, but that's OK. He's never going to be phony.

"It's going to take time (to gain respect), it's hard," said Charlo, THE RING's No. 2-rated junior middleweight. "They'll give us the respect later, eventually."

But boxing is a what-have-you-done-for-me-lately sport. Every time a fighter scores a big win, media and fans are there to ask, "What's next?"

Charlo's WBC title defense against Lubin was sandwiched between two other junior middleweight fights on Showtime: an IBF title tilt featuring Jarrett Hurd-Austin Trout and division kingpin Erislandy Lara's 12-round rout of Terrell Gausha to retain his WBA belt.

Lara's fight was so aesthetically unpleasing that a mass exodus ensued at Brooklyn's Barclays Center during the main event.

But Hurd (who was defending the belt vacated when Jermall Charlo moved up to middleweight) and Trout threw down in a barnburner, and it again was apparent that the young titleholder's power and relentlessness is a special blend, even if there are technical flaws he must clean up.

The trio of fights proved one thing: Showtime has wisely invested in the talent-laden 154-pound weight class, and it could pay off soon.

"Charlo vs. Hurd is one of the fights we are most looking forward to in 2018," said Showtime Sports Executive Vice President/General Manager Stephen Espinoza. "Not just because it's a unification match – a unification we've been seeking for the past 18 months or so – but because it's a great style matchup.

"Both guys are aggressive, come-forward, all-action fighters with serious power. Both have delivered great fights along the way and there's little doubt that when they meet, it'll be explosive."

Hurd's style lends itself to explosive matchups. He swarms and walks through your best shots and keeps throwing, even if his footwork is a mess at times.

Sooner or later, it's all too much for his opponents and he's the one standing in the end.

He's brimming with confidence, too. But if it's up to him, he'd like to let the Charlo matchup "marinate a little bit, save the best for last."

"It's a megafight – that's the big fight that everyone is really waiting for," said Hurd, THE RING's No. 4-rated fighter in the division. "The man to really watch out for is me. I'm the gatekeeper, I'm underestimated and no one is talking about me. I'm creeping up; I'm the one to watch out for.

"I like that they keep overlooking me, because it makes it that much better when I get the victory."

Hurd (21-0, 15 KOs) knows he's raw. That's the reason, he says, Trout was the opponent he selected. He wanted to match chops with a guy who has been in the ring with the likes of Miguel Cotto (victory), Canelo Alvarez (close decision loss) and Lara (wide points defeat).

The 27-year-old Hurd now owes a title defense to mandatory challenger Cedric Vitu, a lightly regarded Frenchman. After that's out of the way, he wants to make it three southpaw opponents in a row with a bout against Lara to unify two titles.

Yes, that Lara – the guy no one wants to fight due to his ugly style that's hard to dissect and even harder to look good against.

But if Hurd can beat THE RING's No. 1-ranked junior middleweight? That would make an eventual meeting with Charlo monumentally bigger, even if an assignment with Lara is incredibly risky. Only Hurd isn't worried. And he doesn't believe it would be a boring affair, either.

He points to Lara's thrilling 2013 bout with Mexican slugger Alfredo Angulo.

The Cuban was forced to rise off the canvas twice that night, but he weathered the storm, badly damaged Angulo's eye and prevailed via 10th-round stoppage.

Hurd took note of Angulo's success and believes it's the blueprint for dethroning Lara.

"Switching southpaw to right-handed, walking him down. And Angulo was a much slower fighter than I am and not as big, but constant pressure and constant awkwardness gave him so much problems before Lara landed that big shot and hurt his eye," said Hurd, a native of Maryland.

"Lara says he wants those (marquee) fights, but they don't seem to happen. He's not getting the quality of opponents we expect him to fight, but we'll see."

Hurd's plan: mandatory defense in early 2018, Lara in the summer, Charlo toward the end of the year.

To which Lara says, bring it on!

The former amateur star and longtime 154-pound standout is tired of the disrespect. Tired of hearing he's boring. Tired of the criticism against his opposition.

"I want to keep moving my career forward and getting wins, and I want

Jarrett Hurd's potent blend of size, strength and durability continues to overwhelm opponents.

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Erislandy Lara is the least entertaining of the 154-pound titleholders but he's a boxing master and remains THE RING's top-rated junior middleweight.

to be in the biggest fights in the division," said Lara (25-2-2, 14 KOs), with longtime manager Luis DeCubas Jr. providing the translation.

"Whether it's Hurd or Charlo, put them in front of me and I'll keep wiping out the division. And I'm looking to add more belts to my collection.

"These guys don't want to fight me. I fight the best when the best want to fight me. Everyone talks about my past opponents, but three of the five were former champions. All of them are solid guys. But we can't sit around and wait."

DeCubas was quick to point out that Lara fought the long-avoided Paul Williams in just his 17th pro fight. And, of course, Lara fought Canelo to a controversial decision setback.

Call Lara boring if you want, but there's no doubting his ring generalship and technique; he's a master of space and angles.

"Lara is one of the most skilled fighters in boxing today," said Espinoza, whose network televised Lara's 2014 fight with Canelo on pay-per-view. "He deserves no less respect than (Vasyl) Lomachenko and (Guillermo) Rigondeaux. When you're matching up the best fighters in a division, looking to determine who the best is, you don't always get a slugfest or a brawl.

"There's so much at stake in these fights, sometimes a high-level tactical fight is the result. Lara has earned his spot and deserves the opportunity to unify the division."

The 34-year-old Lara swears Charlo may say in public he wants to face him, but sings a different tune "behind closed doors" when it comes time to negotiate.

Hurd is calling for the fight on his own, though. And Lara welcomes it.

"I'm happy the young guys think like that. You have to have that attitude, you have to beat the best to be the best," Lara said. "I love that style matchup, and hopefully (Hurd) puts the pressure on like Angulo and I can leave his face the same way when the fight is over.

"My plan is to wipe out Hurd and Charlo in any order, and at that point reassess the division."

So just who will be standing when the dust settles? And will we even see this round-robin unfold? If it's up to Espinoza, and he has a key voice in the matter, we will.

And the smart money is on Charlo. He's one of the best young talents in the sport and his game is multifaceted, ever improving with each subsequent outing. His power is improving, he has tremendous size for the division and his athleticism is unmatched.

But he's yet to face anyone like Lara, or Hurd (who is even bigger) for that matter – two incredibly contrasting styles that each present their own unique challenges.

Charlo can do little more than shrug his shoulders. Lubin? He was supposed to trouble the Texan in ways we'd never seen. Vanquished in one round.

Now, the stakes are higher. These are unification matchups with a chance to cement a legacy.

"That will let me be almost like a new face and the best face in boxing, because I'm a unified champion once I fight (Hurd)," Charlo stated. "I think it would be an easy fight for me. It wouldn't be as hard as it seems.

"There's no fight out there I would grab now (other than Hurd). I'm already messing up what they're trying to build. As long as I keep doing that, it doesn't even matter."

He prides himself on doing exactly that: upsetting the apple cart and making mincemeat out of prized prospects.

Hurd, too, feels overlooked.

"It's almost like I envision it in my head, all the odds against me, 'This kid Hurd has no chance against Charlo.' I prove everyone wrong. I said I would go out there and get the stoppage against Austin Trout.

"I see (a fight with Charlo) being more technical, not just a toe-to-toe, brutal fight. It's going to be technical in the beginning. I don't have the biggest amateur background, but as the fight goes on, I always get stronger. And then the second half of the fight, I pick it up and start dominating."

Both men have a case when it comes to respect. For Charlo, fame has eluded him. Perhaps it's his surly personality. Or the way he refuses to pretend to respect his opponent following a heated build-up. He admits he hasn't been "able to sit back and enjoy (the Lubin win) yet. I'm trying, though. Eventually I will.

"It gets to a point where we just want the respect already."

If you're going to discuss who the most underappreciated fighter in the division is, though, you don't have to think hard. It's Lara.

He's proven his mettle. He's fought the best. If fights with Hurd and/or Charlo come to fruition, the Cuban might finally – after all these years – get his day in the sun.

"I'm not worried about what the critics are saying, I pushed the fight forward, I was trying to make the action in that fight. Gausha was not willing to exchange," Lara said, the frustration apparent in his voice.

"These guys gotta fight me. When I fight action fighters, I make good, entertaining fights like I did with Paul Williams and Angulo. These young guys have to bring that out, and if not, I'll cruise to a decision.

"I'm the longest-standing dog here and I'm going to keep being here."

Not if Charlo and Hurd have anything to say about it. RING

AP

'A COMPLETE PHENOMENON'

HEAVYWEIGHTS ARE ALL THE RAGE IN THE U.K. RIGHT NOW. OR, MORE PRECISELY, **ANTHONY JOSHUA** IS.

Anthony Joshua isn't just one of the biggest draws in British boxing right now. The two-belt world titleholder is so much more than that: He is fast emerging as one of the biggest stars crossing over to the mainstream in British life on this side of the Atlantic.

They say "AJ" could be headed for an *annus mirabilis* in 2018, but as ever with big money, big egos and big men driven to keep relevant through unbeaten records, obstacles need to be overcome and holes smashed through stone walls. There is a reason why the "undisputed" tag is so difficult to get a hold of. It would not surprise me in the least if Joshua has just one unification fight in the coming year, but what is clear from being close to those around him is that he's an intriguing and remarkable young man.

Promoter Eddie Hearn offered a fascinating insight to me behind the scenes as AJ was preparing to fight Carlos Takam a few weeks back. "He's a complete phenomenon," said Hearn. "I've never known a person or an athlete or a sports star that touches so many different genres and ages and demographics. It doesn't matter whether you are a 6- or 7-year-old kid, an 18-year-old man, a middle-aged man, a housewife, a grandmother – you love Anthony Joshua. You cannot not love him. I've never known anyone to say one bad word about him."

An interesting, take, too, on the very modern promoter's role. "AJ is my boss. No question. The old days were 'you work for me.' But I work for Anthony Joshua. When I'm doing a good job, I stay. If I mess up or do a bad job, I probably go. I want to represent AJ from his debut to the end of his career. If at any time he didn't want me to do that, we shake hands and we move on. For me, I'd be totally shocked if that's anywhere in the pipeline.

"AJ texted me the other day and said how long do you want me to fight for? I said the moment your desire goes is the moment you should stop. This is a very dangerous sport. I said it's not like being in the office. All of a sudden you don't want to be in the office anymore, but you can style it out for another six months or maybe a year before everyone else realizes that. You can duck and dive and get away with things. You can't in boxing. Not at that level.

"You'll get knocked out, you'll get hurt. I said to him as long as you had the desire. He said, 'Well, I'm all right at the moment.' I said, 'Thank God for that.' But you don't know. Maybe in two or three fights he turns round and says, 'You know, I'm done.'"

Utterly fascinating, and perhaps explains why Joshua remains the A-side against all comers in the division – not to mention the crowds of 70,000-90,000 he has pulled in this year.

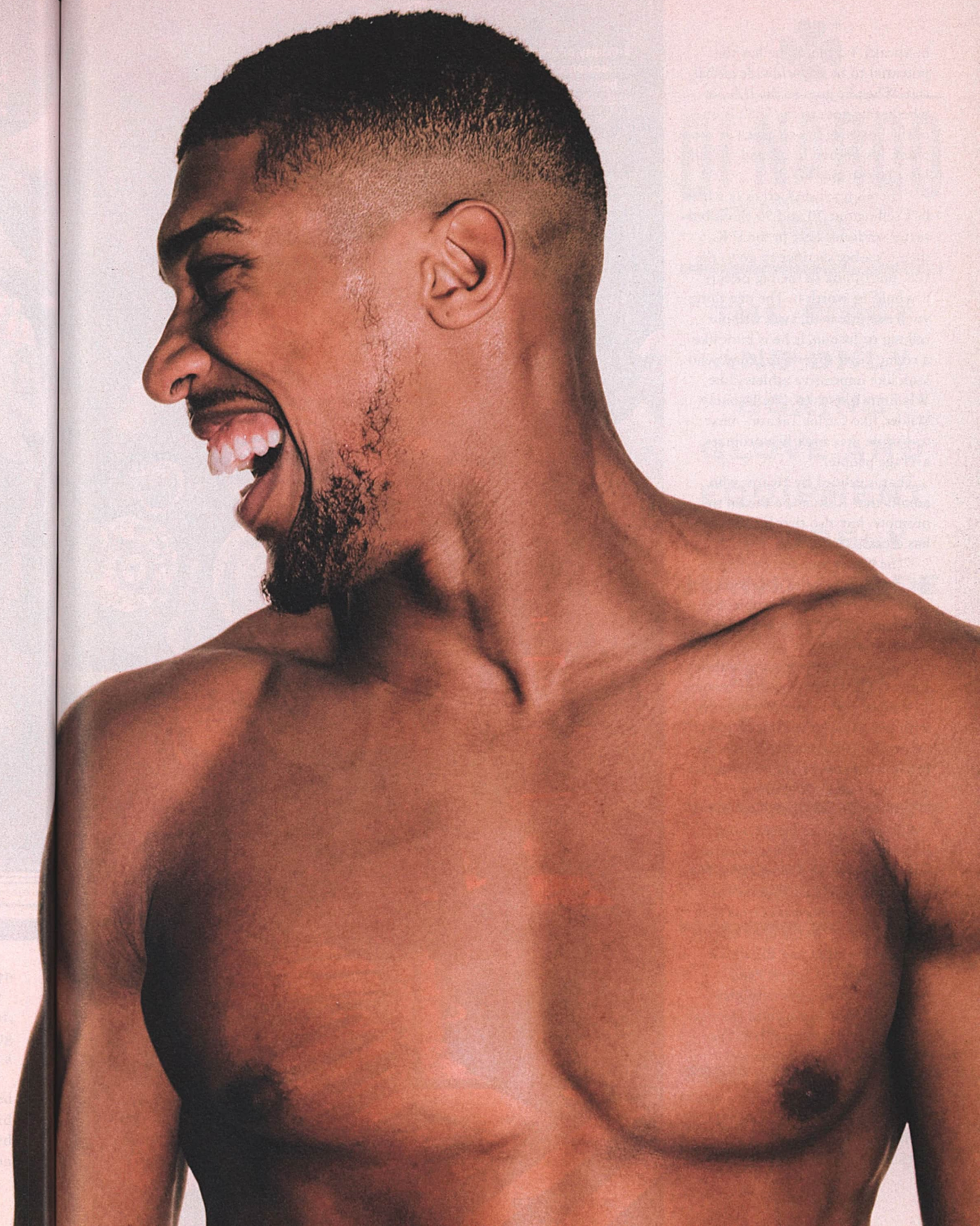
"He's got the support and the adulation of the country because of his approach and his attitude and because of the way he treats other people," added Hearn, which led me to write a column in the lead-in to the Takam fight suggesting that Joshua is developing a "Muhammad Ali Effect." People were handing their small children to him at the fighter workouts, as if it were a benediction.

"If he was an arsehole," says Hearn, "nobody would like him. Nobody would give him the respect. But he's not. He is what he is.

"When you can't even walk out your house anymore without 50 people following you and chasing you down the street, it's taxing. It's stressful. All he really wants to do is go round his mum's with his mates and play FIFA. That's his life. He loves to train, and compete, and in the downtime he likes to go on holiday with his family, chill with his mates. He doesn't drink. He's perfect."

That view is shared by Stephen Espinoza of Showtime Sports.

"He certainly has all the tools, the prerequisites. He has that aura," Espinoza told me while on his sojourn to the U.K. "It's early in his career and he's young, but you can see the personal connection he makes with people and the charisma he has. The way



he speaks. I do think he has the potential to be a worldwide global star. When he goes to the U.S., or whether he goes to the U.S., is one of the boxes he has to check at some point. It's not the be all and end all. It's a box to check.

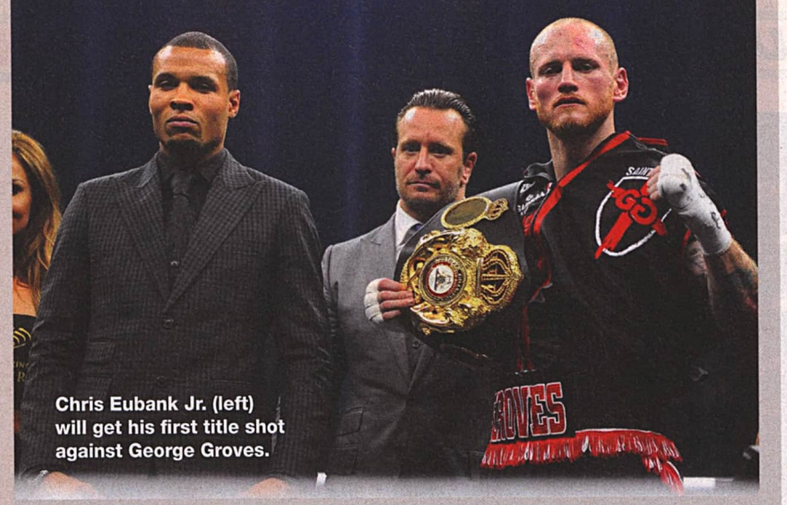
"There's no rush. Certainly when he's selling out 70 and 90 thousand-seater stadiums here in the U.K., then it's a big sacrifice to go to the U.S. But I think in the big picture it would be worth it. The one thing you're struck with, even without talking to Joshua, is he is built like a comic book superhero. Guys who look like impressive athletes like Wladimir Klitschko, like Deontay Wilder, like Carlos Takam – next to Joshua they look like ordinary, average people."

That is echoed by Hearn, who admits that Joshua is a dream to promote, but also that his success has created challenges.

"The bigger you get, the bigger the demands are. I'm not talking about the demands of people, but international TV. Now it's every territory and they're paying a lot of money and now they want Anthony Joshua. They're paying their money, so they've got to have five minutes with him. That's the difficult part, maintaining the partnerships – the broadcast partners, the commercial sponsors – and not letting it interfere with your preparation."

But what will be most telling is the direction the Joshua/Hearn axis turns after one more fight. The Showtime deal is up, and Hearn told me in no uncertain terms that they are going "to the open market." That means HBO and Executive Vice President of Sports Peter Nelson will also come into play. Let's hope that Joshua and Deontay Wilder do get it on in 2018. The loud, proud "Bronze Bomber" against AJ, the man of the people. It is the fight that could define a new heavyweight era. And they could fight more than once, of course. Let's hope so.

Anthony Joshua's collection of belts is beginning to look Klitschko-esque.



Chris Eubank Jr. (left) will get his first title shot against George Groves.

GEORGE GROVES VS. CHRIS EUBANK JR. HEATING UP FOR 2018

With victories for George Groves and Chris Eubank Jr. in the super middleweight semifinals of the World Boxing Super Series, a mouth-watering showdown is emerging for the early part of 2018. The matchup is resonating on these shores, with Eubank getting his first serious acid test since he suffered his only defeat – narrowly on points – to Billy Joe Saunders at middleweight as a raw novice. Eubank has made a point of telling anyone who will listen that he will stop Groves emphatically and decisively, and the WBA titleholder has responded in kind.

Groves – lamenting the fact that IBF titleholder James DeGale was unable to be in the tournament due to surgery – believes the winner will come out with an enhanced reputation.

"Fighters went into the Super Six a few years ago and came out of it big stars, like Andre Ward and Carl Froch. There's a lot at stake and a lot to gain and learn. There are a lot of rewards there. Certainly, winning this tournament would put me in a fantastic situation. I've got to win it.

"It would have been great to have all the champions there. That's what I was hoping for originally. I didn't think DeGale would go in it because of the format and the structure and the fighter list. It's three fights in 10 months and he wasn't fit to fight at the time. But I'm happy to go out and fight anyone and pick them all off after this."

But first, Groves will have to silence Eubank – and his irascible and still very popular father, Chris Eubank Sr. And that is going to take some doing ... but it augurs well for an exciting start to 2018. Cheers.

TOP 10

1. CARL FRAMPTON
2. ANTHONY JOSHUA
3. TONY BELLEW
4. JAMES DEGALE
5. LEE SELBY
6. TERRY FLANAGAN
7. GEORGE GROVES
8. KELL BROOK
9. KAL YAFAI
10. JAMIE MCDONNELL

11-15: Billy Joe Saunders, Ryan Burnett, Callum Smith, Chris Eubank Jr., Scott Quigg.

Through fights of Nov. 12, 2017

* Tyson Fury out based on inactivity for two years.

Gareth A Davies is Boxing Correspondent for the London Daily Telegraph.

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BEST OF DOUGIE'S MAILBAG

By Doug Fischer

Bermane Stiverne (right) had nowhere to hide from Deontay Wilder.

EXCERPTS FROM THE RINGTV.COM EDITOR'S POPULAR COLUMN

Since 2001, RingTV.com Editor Doug Fischer has held an ongoing dialogue – which occasionally becomes heated debate – with boxing fans from around the world in "Dougie's Mailbag." The following excerpts are from the Oct. 30, Nov. 3 and Nov. 6 editions of the Friday and Monday mailbag.

JAMAAL, from Louisiana, was impressed with Deontay Wilder's one-round demolition of Bermane Stiverne on Nov. 4, but he wants to see the bombastic puncher in the ring with a worthy rival – he's ready for the showdown between Wilder and Anthony Joshua and he says there's no need for the promoters to "build up" the event. "They're both undefeated, charismatic heavyweight champs and Wilder is calling Joshua out after an exciting KO. Why not next?" Jamaal asks.

DOUGIE's reply: No need to "marinate" a showdown between athletic heavyweights in their prime with a combined record of 59-0 (58 knockouts) and three major world titles (and quite possibly the RING belt) on the line, eh?

If the managers/promoters of Anthony Joshua and Deontay Wilder can make a deal for the first quarter of 2018, I don't think a single boxing fan on the planet will complain.

However, boxing is as much a business as it is a sport (and when hundreds of millions of dollars are potentially on the line, it becomes more of a business), so we can expect an extended negotiation process with lots of gamesmanship between the teams of the heavyweight titans (as the purse split, location, venue, networks, sponsors, etc., are worked out and agreed upon) which will likely push their seemingly inevitable meeting toward the summer or fall of 2018.

PHILIP DU PLESSIS, from Gloucester, U.K., was not impressed with Anthony Joshua's 10th-round stoppage of tough Carlos Takam on Oct. 28 and he's convinced that "a fit and motivated Tyson Fury" would give that version of Joshua "a boxing lesson" (although he doubts we will ever see the version of Fury who faced Wladimir Klitschko again). Philip asked Fischer if he heard that Larry Holmes told U.K. media that Joshua would have knocked out a prime Mike Tyson. He's not buying what the former heavyweight champ and Hall of Famer is selling. "Can you imagine the carnage if the guy ducking and weaving in front of Joshua (on Oct. 28) was a prime Tyson?"

DOUGIE'S reply: Maybe what Holmes meant to say is that Joshua has the physical and mental potential to one day develop into the kind of heavyweight juggernaut that could have stopped a prime Tyson. AJ's not there yet – not even close – but we must keep in mind that the 28-year-

old IBF/WBA titleholder only has 20 bouts under his belt and still has yet to go the 12-round distance. He's got a lot to learn, and most of his education will take place during tough fights like the one he had against Takam.

Prime Iron Mike would have quickly turned the version of Joshua we saw against Takam into Frank Bruno. But if AJ learns to mix a little bit of Larry's game into his George Foreman 2.0 style, he'll be able to deal with technically sound pit bulls like Tyson. But to do that, he's gotta lose some of that bulk to increase his stamina and punch output (primarily his jab).

You're probably right about a fit and motivated Fury giving Joshua fits. However, by the time Fury finally gets his act together, Joshua may very well have developed into the world-beater that Holmes believes he can be.

DAVID, from Nashville, Tennessee, was blown away by what he saw from 19-year-old junior lightweight prospect Ryan Garcia on a Nov. 2 "Golden Boy Boxing on ESPN" show. "The kid was poised, his punches flowed so smoothly and he could crack with both hands," said David. "His timing was unbelievable. He flashed the left hook with a level of skill that belied his age. That kid is a competitor and is going to be a force in the division." David is also excited about light heavyweight titleholder Dmitry Bivol, whom he describes as "a smooth boxer who can hit" and "a pleasure to watch." He hopes Bivol will be a future opponent for Sergey Kovalev.

DOUGIE'S reply: Garcia is gifted with speed, pop, timing, good looks and charisma. That's a winning/marketable combination. However, although his punches are fast and fluid, it looks like he's loading up a lot, and almost launching his shots like fastballs. Hopefully, as he matures, he'll realize that he doesn't have to try to KO his opponent with every punch.

But I can see why you're excited about the kid; he really shined against Cesar Valenzuela. It was like he produced that first knockdown by accident, which is crazy. That hook he landed reminded me of Manny Pacquiao's knockdown of Juan Manuel Marquez in their rematch (at junior lightweight).

I agree that the newly crowned NABF 130-pound titleholder will be a force in the division. All he has to do is keep learning and improve his defensive technique.

Regarding Bivol, he's must-see TV. And chances are the next time you see him on HBO, he'll be in with a legit top-10 light heavyweight contender. Bivol is the WBA titleholder. The WBA's top three contenders are Sullivan Barrera, Badou Jack and Oleksandr Gvozdyk. (Kovalev is rated No. 6, Joe Smith Jr. is No. 8 and Marcus Browne is No. 9.)

MATT, from Merritt Island, Florida, proposed three mythical matchups involving Gennady Golovkin: Golovkin vs. the Sugar Ray Leonard that "beat" Marvin Hagler (at 160 pounds), Golovkin vs. the Sergio Martinez that iced Paul Williams (at 160 pounds), and Golovkin vs. the Manny Pacquiao that dominated and punished Antonio Margarito (at 155 pounds)

DOUGIE'S reply: Leonard outjabs and outmaneuvers Golovkin en route to a somewhat controversial unanimous decision.

Golovkin stops Martinez late in a very good fight.

And GGG knocks Pacquiao out cold by the middle rounds (as soon as he's able to acclimate to the Filipino dynamo's speed and time a cross or hook upside his head). Pacquiao-Margarito was at a 150-pound catchweight and the Filipino icon weighed in UNDER 145 pounds. Even against a weight-drained version of Golovkin, I think Pacquiao is much too small for the middleweight standout.

DANIEL DUBOIS

THE YOUNG HEAVYWEIGHT FROM LONDON COULD BE POISED FOR A RECORD-SETTING CAREER

He's unbeaten in five professional fights with less than 10 minutes of ring time. He's 6-foot-5 inches tall, roughly 235 pounds and still growing. He knocked down reigning IBF and WBA heavyweight titleholder Anthony Joshua in sparring. And he only just turned 20 years old. Now, you decide if you want to read on.

Daniel Dubois is one of the most exciting prospects in U.K. boxing right now. The colossal Londoner began boxing at 6 years old when his father took him to the gym. He was hooked on the sport instantly, watching Muhammad Ali and Mike Tyson fights at a time when most kids are watching cartoons and playing game consoles.

Intensely committed from the beginning, Dubois captured five British junior titles and one British senior title as an amateur. Because he was so young, only four of roughly 75 amateur bouts took place at senior level (17 and older). His potential, however, was obvious. Initially touted as a lock for the Tokyo 2020 Olympics, Dubois and his team made the decision to enter the paid ranks.

"With the Olympics being four years away, I just decided against it," said Dubois, who made his debut in April. "I thought, 'Let's go professional and we can be world champion in two or three years.' Why wait? We got a good offer from (promoter) Frank Warren and (U.K. subscription channel) BT Sport, so everything was set and we decided to take the opportunity.

"Being a professional allows me to develop my punching technique and my power. Everything about my style, all my attributes, will improve because I'm in the gym working hard every day. Just being in a professional environment, where everyone has the same goal, definitely helps. As does the sparring I've had with the likes of Joe Joyce (an Olympic silver medalist) and Anthony Joshua, among others."

Mark and Tony Bowers opened the famed Peacock Gym in London in 1978. Mark is both trainer and manager for Dubois and he's exceptionally proud of what the young heavyweight has achieved. As always in boxing, that success has been down to hard work and perseverance, but Bowers was keen to point out that Dubois is far more than just a spectacular knockout artist.

"Daniel's not just a big boy, he's an athlete," said the London-born coach. "Everything we do (in the gym), he's good at. I'm not blowing his trumpet in any way, shape or form, but he's not just a boxer. He's got a good eye, he's mobile and he's athletic. He's not a robot, but, again, he's only had nine fights as a senior and that's amateur and pro. There's a long way to go, but he's showing good signs.

"He's never late, always on time, and he gets on with everyone in the gym. He's just a nice young lad. He's not a bully in the gym. Obviously, we do lots of hard rounds here and at other gyms, but he's very respectful to everyone he trains alongside. He's just a genuinely nice kid."

But appearances can be deceiving. You know if Dubois is in the Peacock Gym before you walk through the door because the sounds of his ferocious combinations on the heavy bag are a dead giveaway. Three of the youngster's five professional fights have ended inside the opening minute, and the journeymen that Dubois has been feeding on have been absorbing devastating punishment.

"There's no messing around when I'm in there," said Dubois before breaking into infectious laughter. "But I don't actually go in there looking for the knockout. I go in there to box but, with my power being so destructive, if I tag them early, they go. That's how it's been so far. But if I need to do the rounds, I'm more than ready.

"I've gone long distance in sparring with fresh sparring partners. There are no concerns whatsoever in terms of my stamina."

Dubois seeks "perfection," but he needs time. Bowers, a cerebral and confident coach, talks like a man who has seen it and done it. There was no attempt to hype his fighter, an unattractive habit many trainers develop when they have a potential star. Bowers didn't have to think twice when he was asked what improvements Dubois will be required to make. He was also keen to point out that this is a marathon, not a sprint.

"Probably a little bit of head movement, a little bit of lateral movement, so it flows a little more," said Bowers. "But look, he's a baby. So I don't want to pick him to pieces. We're gently working on those things, we're progressing and, hopefully, that'll show through.

"He's got a very good fight next time – Dorian Darch (on December 9). I think that'll be a good test and I think we'll get a few more rounds with Dorian because of his head movement and awkwardness. That could be one of those fights where Daniel is going to have to concentrate and maybe not rely on his power as much."

There has been talk that Dubois could go on to become the youngest British heavyweight champion in boxing history. That distinction currently belongs to former WBO titleholder Herbie Hide, who was 22½ years old. With unassailable ambition and youthful vigor, Dubois would probably like to aim for that record, but his trainer is eager for him to earn his position and do things at the right time.

The fighter remains unfazed and just goes about his business.

"There's no pressure. I just stay dedicated in the gym," said Dubois softly. "I work hard towards making my goals a reality. I work on my game day by day. I don't dwell on those things. I'm aware of all the attention, but I just stay focused and hungry. That's what I'm about, really. I don't get caught up in things that I can't control.

"I'm focused on one fight at a time and I never overlook anyone. I stay 100 percent committed to what I'm doing. The heavyweight division is looking very lively. There's plenty of fights and plenty of titles to be won. If I can get my hands on them, then I'm gonna go for it. My overall ambition is to be world champion and make my family proud. I want to do them proud and show them the best of me."

Dubois could scarcely be off to a better start.

THE ESSENTIALS
DANIEL DUBOIS

Age: 20

Weight class: Heavyweight

Height: 6 feet 5 inches

Stance: Orthodox

Hometown: London

Record: 5-0 (5 knockouts)

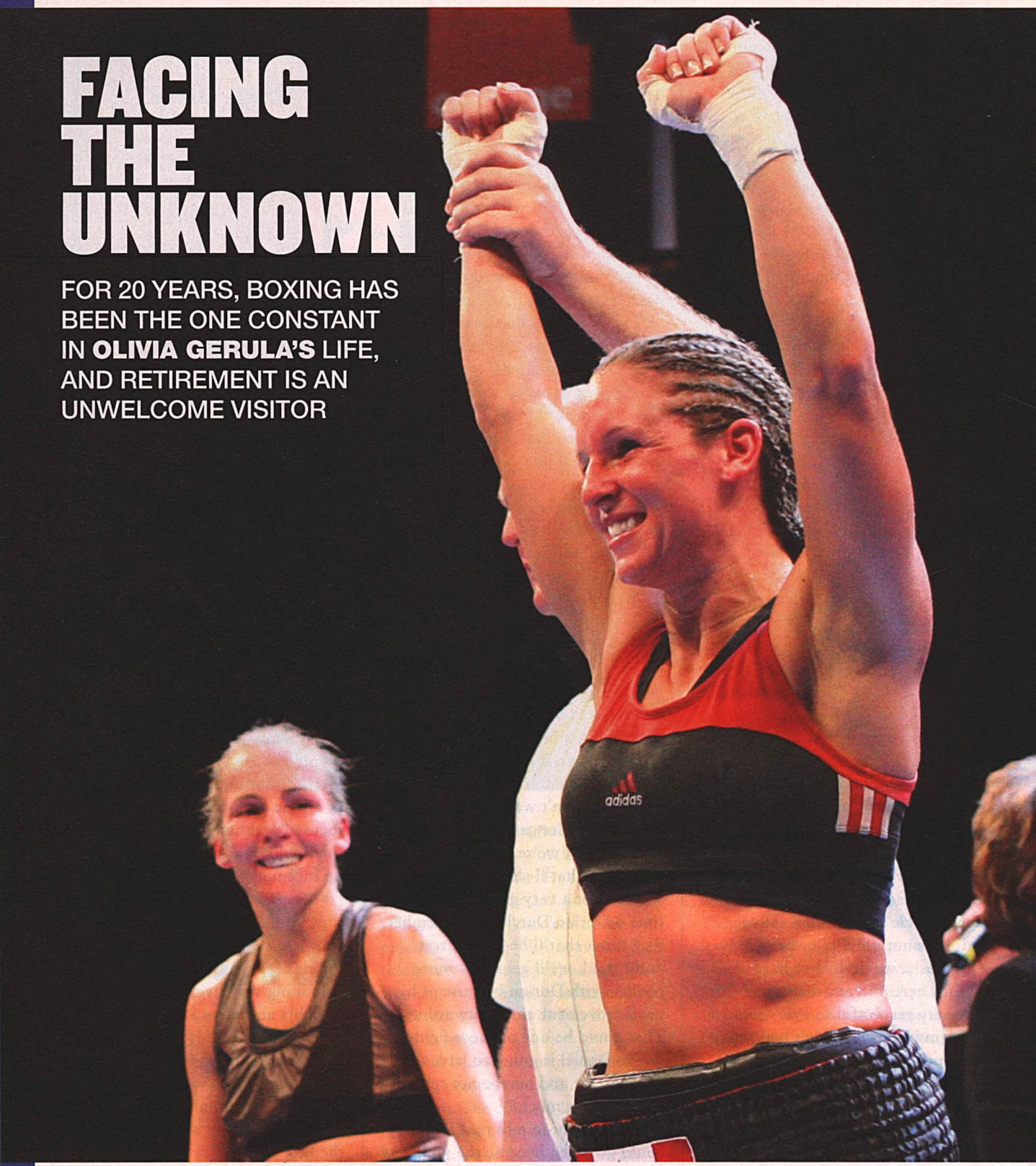
Biggest Strengths: Size, athleticism, devastating punching power

Biggest question marks: Stamina, endurance and the ability to take a direct hit

Tom Gray is the associate editor for THE RING. Follow him on Twitter: @Tom_Gray_Boxing.

FACING THE UNKNOWN

FOR 20 YEARS, BOXING HAS BEEN THE ONE CONSTANT IN **OLIVIA GERULA'S** LIFE, AND RETIREMENT IS AN UNWELCOME VISITOR



In a lot of ways, Olivia Gerula's career could be summed up in her 2003 bout with Mia St. John. Traveling from her home in Winnipeg to fight the popular St. John in North Dakota, Gerula was left with a six-round draw in a bout most observers believed she won. As the Canadian left the venue, she saw the promotional material for the fight.

"There was a life-size cutout of her in a bikini and my name spelled wrong at the bottom," Gerula laughs. "It's been an interesting career."

It has been. A pro since 1997,

Gerula is one of the rare fighters to have bridged the gap between eras, fighting the best of both. From early battles with the likes of Kathy Collins, Fredia Gibbs and Melissa Del Valle to clashes with current stars Jelena Mrdjenovich (three times), Kaliesha West and Amanda Serrano, she has seen it all in the game.

But at 38, the fighter with the deceiving 18-17-2 (3 knockouts) record is starting to see the end of the road. And she doesn't like the view.

"This is supposed to be my retirement year," she said. "This is my 20th year as a pro boxer, and I don't even know what I'm going to do after I retire. Boxing defined me for so many years that I think once I stop boxing, I don't know how I'll feel about myself and my accomplishments. And that's something that's really hard to swallow. I've been through engagements and marriages, divorce and all this stuff, and the constant in my life has always been boxing. So once I give that up … OK, now what do I do?"

It's the dilemma every fighter faces, and Gerula isn't ready to go yet; "supposed to be" is the key phrase when it comes to her retirement year. At the moment, a bout with Sarah Pucek originally scheduled for September and then November is not happening. But Gerula does have an offer on the table for a rematch with Carla Torres, even though there is no date or venue for the featherweight bout. In other words, it's business as usual when it comes to the ladies' side of the game, making one wonder how someone would want to stick around in it for two decades.

"It's pure love," she said. "You just love the sport. I'm still tuning up 20-year-olds in the gym. (Laughs.) If I'm tuning them up, I know that I'm good to go."

Some around her aren't as optimistic. A recent CBC documentary, *The Predator's Last Stand*, didn't exactly turn out the way she had hoped, as it featured her trainer, family members and doctors wondering when enough was going to be enough.

"I did it thinking, OK, this is gonna give some positive exposure to women's boxing. It's gonna shine a light on the difference between the men and the women and show how hard I've been struggling to get sponsorships," Gerula said. "I wanted to air this stuff out. And it ended up coming out almost like an intervention for me to retire. I was shocked.

"I've cleared all of my medicals and there is no issue," she continues. "But at the end of the documentary they said, 'Doctors recommend that Oliva stop boxing.' Then the credits roll and they go, 'Olivia's next fight is in four weeks.' They're neurologists; they don't want *anyone* to box. They never wanted me to start boxing, never mind continue."

The disappointment is clear in her voice. But fighters will always fight, and Gerula is a fighter. A look at the numbers may not put her up with the Cecilia Braekhuses of the world, but with wins over Mrdjenovich and West, plenty of questionable decision losses, only three knockout defeats (to Mrdjenovich and Serrano) and a WBC world title that she successfully defended twice, she has a resume she can hold her head high about.

But no one needs to tell "The Predator" that.

"For the most part, I've always walked into somebody else's backyard, their territory, had everything stacked against me and I fought my ass off," Gerula said. "And the outcome has been the outcome. And as you know, in boxing you can't always control the outcome. But I'm really proud of what I've accomplished in there. Would I like a better record? Sure. But I never fought amateur, I never had a promoter in my pocket and I basically had to fight with blood, sweat and tears to get all those wins." RING

FIGHTER OF THE MONTH

KATIE TAYLOR

Wins first world title in seventh pro fight

Claressa Shields has rightfully received plenty of attention for her accomplishments since turning pro, but with significantly more world-class competition around her at lightweight, Ireland's Katie Taylor may turn out to be the best of the recent crop of former amateur stars entering the pro game. On Oct. 28 in Wales, the 31-year-old Taylor dropped Anahi Esther Sanchez (17-3, 9 KOs) en route to a near-shutout 10-round decision and the vacant WBA lightweight crown, pushing the Bray native's record to 7-0 with 4 KOs.

POUND FOR POUND

1. **CECILIA BRAEKHUS**
   Norway • 32-0 (9 KOs)
   Welterweight
2. **DELFINE PERSOON**
   Belgium • 39-1 (16 KOs)
   Lightweight
3. **YESICA YOLANDA BOPP**
   Argentina • 32-1 (13 KOs)
   Junior flyweight
4. **JESSICA CHAVEZ**
   Mexico • 30-4-3 (4 KOs)
   Flyweight
5. **AMANDA SERRANO**
   U.S. • 34-1-1 (26 KOs)
   Featherweight
6. **JELENA MRDJENOVICH**
   Canada • 37-10-2 (19 KOs)
   Featherweight
7. **ERICA ANABELLA FARIAS**
   Argentina • 24-2 (10 KOs)
   Junior welterweight
8. **LAYLA MCCARTER**
   U.S. • 39-13-5 (10 KOs)
   Lightweight
9. **IBETH ZAMORA SILVA**
   Mexico • 28-6 (12 KOs)
   Junior flyweight
10. **ESMERALDA MORENO**
    Mexico • 35-10-1 (11 KOs)
    Junior flyweight

(Through fights of Nov. 12, 2017)

TUCSON RIDES AGAIN

BOXING HAS FOUND NEW LIFE IN A FAMILIAR OLD WEST TOWN

By **Norm Frauenheim**

Salvador Sanchez, George Foreman, Alexis Arguello, Sugar Ray Leonard and Michael Carbajal fought in Tucson while forging Hall of Fame careers.

They are just some of the notable names that are an unforgettable part of a city with an Old West identity that wouldn't be quite the same without boxing.

They passed through this southern Arizona city like so many others did back in the fabled days when it was still a stagecoach stop. They were on their way to something bigger, or on their way back to where they had been, or just on the run.

The mode and pace of travel have changed. Horses are mostly for postcards and tourists these days. Instead, fighter jets often rattle windows up and down Tucson's busy boulevard, appropriately named Speedway, on their way to and from Davis-Monthan Air Force Base.

Wyatt Earp wouldn't recognize most of it. Yeah, that Wyatt Earp – the controversial lawman who won Arizona's biggest fight ever at the O.K. Corral about 70 miles down the road in Tombstone. But Earp would recognize the boxing.

Fifteen years after a legendary shootout that has produced countless films, Earp was the referee in a controversial fight: Bob Fitzsimmons' DQ win over Tom Sharkey for the 1896 version of the heavyweight title in San Francisco. Think of Julio Cesar Chavez's 1990 victory over Meldrick Taylor, which referee Richard Steele stopped with two seconds left. More than 27 years later, it's still controversial. One-hundred-twenty-one years later, so too is Earp's stoppage in what is now another colorful story that defines a sport that never seems to change a whole lot.

Boxing is little bit like baseball when it comes to history; it's often at its best when it repeats itself. Baseball has a new champion in 2017, but the Houston Astros had to go through a piece of Americana, a classic World Series, to get there. From a worn old road map to GPS, it's always been there.

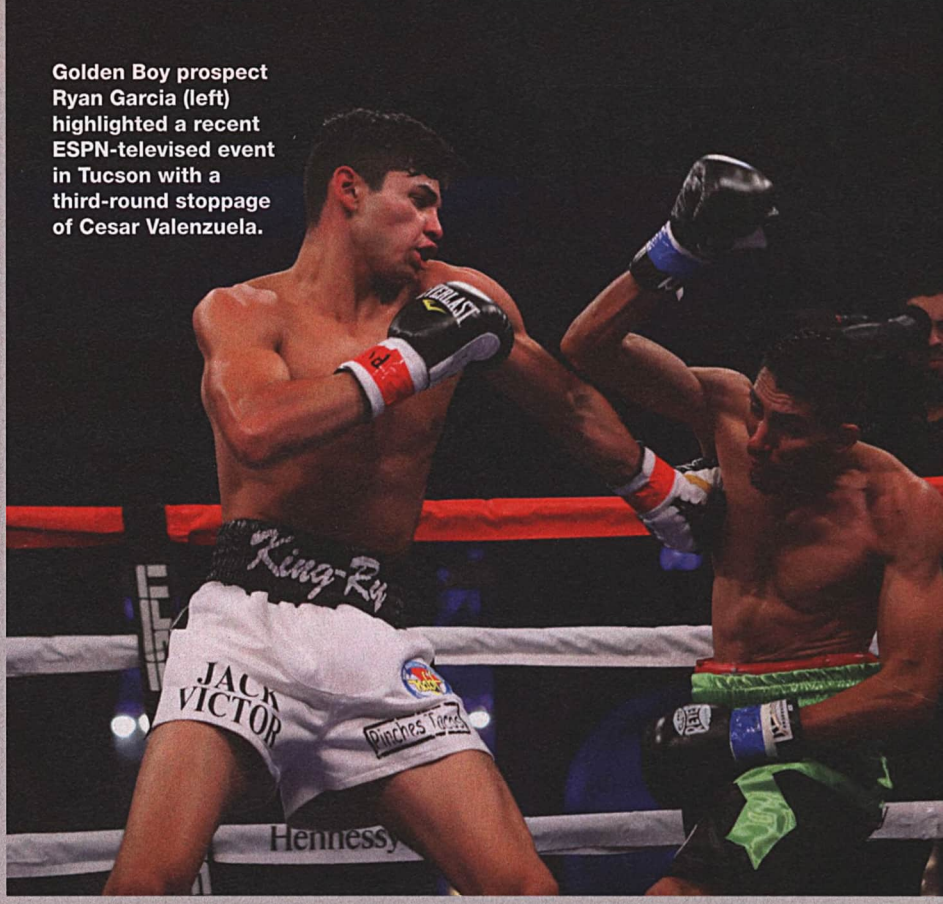
At a lesser level, that's what Tucson – and much of Arizona – has been for boxing. It's a historical crossroads and the legends have been there on their way to Las Vegas or Los Angeles or New York. And it's still a place where a fighter can potentially stand out.

"A key stop back in the day and as viable a market now as ever, in part because there isn't a big league baseball team or other major-league sports that can make it so hard to get attention," said Bruce Trampler, a longtime Top Rank matchmaker who has a keen interest in boxing history in the American Southwest.

Top Rank and Golden Boy

MIKEY WILLIAMS / TOP RANK

Oscar Valdez (opposite page) thrilled the fans of his adopted hometown by dropping gutsy Genesis Servania in Round 5 of their 12-round barnburner.



Golden Boy prospect Ryan Garcia (left) highlighted a recent ESPN-televised event in Tucson with a third-round stoppage of Cesar Valenzuela.

Promotions are back in Tucson – Top Rank with WBO featherweight titleholder Oscar Valdez Jr. and Golden Boy with ESPN shows.

Valdez, a two-time Mexican Olympian from nearby Nogales who grew up in Tucson, has fought at the old Community Center twice, including an ESPN-televised title defense in front of a crowd of 4,103 on the same night that the University of Arizona football team played a home game a few blocks away.

Golden Boy has staged three ESPN-televised cards at Casino Del Sol south of Tucson – first featuring Diego De La Hoya in a victory just two fights before his gritty decision over Randy Caballero on the pay-per-view undercard of Canelo Alvarez-Gennady Golovkin, then Sadam Ali in a victory to set up facing Miguel Cotto and finally a Jesus Soto Karass loss on a card dominated by emerging junior lightweight prospect Ryan Garcia. Each drew near-capacity crowds in a ballroom with about 2,000 seats.

Golden Boy, in association with Showdown Promotions, hopes to return to Casino Del Sol with four, maybe five cards in 2018.

"We've presented the Casino 15 dates for 2018," Gerry Truax, Showdown's Director of Boxing, said after the last card on Nov. 2. "We're hoping for four. Five might be a little much. But definitely I think everybody in the business is being reawakened to how good a market Tucson is.

"It has that unique history. A lot of great names have fought there and I think that's created a community of some very smart fans. They know what they're watching.

"As a matchmaker, that means you've got to give them good bouts. For the fighters, it means they've got to deliver. We look at Tucson as kind of a launching pad for the champions you're soon going to see."

For so many for so long, that's exactly what the southern Arizona city has been. For De La Hoya, a shot at a major 122-pound title looks to be inevitable after his impressive decision over Caballero, a former bantamweight titleholder. Ali's victory over Johan Perez in July launched him into a shot at a 154-pound belt against the retiring Cotto at New York's Madison Square Garden on Dec. 2. For Ryan Garcia, it just looks like the beginning of a career destined for stardom.

For Valdez, his second fight in Tucson – where his mom still lives – was a lot more difficult than his fans expected. In his third title defense, he had to get up from a fifth-round knockdown for a hard-fought decision over the unknown and underrated Genesis Servania on a card that included Mexican super middleweight beltholder Gilberto Ramirez in a hard-fought decision over Jesse Hart of Philadelphia.

Valdez probably took more punches than he had to in front of a raucous crowd full of Mexican fans who made the 131-mile trip from Nogales, at the northernmost end of the Mexican state of Sonora, across the border and into Tucson.

After it was over, Valdez trainer Manny Robles looked as if he had just climbed off a roller coaster ride gone awry. He was relieved, yet not exactly happy at Valdez's repeated willingness to exchange punches with Servania. Valdez was too eager to please, Robles said.

But Valdez also knew his audience. He had been in that building as a kid, just one in a crowd learning how to be fans from their demanding dads. There was a day, he said, when he had demanded a lot, too. Disappointing them, he said, would have disappointed him.

"Coming back here, helping to re-establish Tucson as the fight town I've always known it to be, was one of the things I wanted to do when I signed with Top Rank," Valdez said. "I had to deliver."

He could have paid for it, in terms of vulnerabilities that Leo Santa Cruz or Abner Mares or Carl Frampton or some other potential foe might've seen in him. There's also an old theory that there are only so many tough fights in one career. After Servania, Valdez might have one less of them.

But he also knew that he was in a

ring and place that was part of his upbringing. He went to elementary school a few blocks from Tucson's Community Center. He played on the streets surrounding the old arena. He had heard about the fights waged there. He knew the iconic Salvador Sanchez and Ruben Castillo battled there, Sanchez winning a unanimous decision on April 12, 1980, in the first defense of a title he won by stopping Danny Lopez up the interstate in Phoenix earlier that year.

Tucson was a place for proof, a rite of passage for young Mexican fighters. Top Rank's Bob Arum has said that Valdez has the potential to join that long line of great Mexican featherweights, including Erik Morales, Marco Antonio Barrera and, yes, even Sanchez. That's a tough – perhaps impossible – challenge, but Tucson was the right place to begin to prove Arum right. Go ahead and ask: Can he? Can anybody?

If Valdez's title defense in an arena as old-school as any in the West carried on a tradition, Valdez did not disappoint. He didn't drop that symbolic baton.

In some ways, the Top Rank card on Sept. 22 marked a resumption of a Tucson tradition that had begun to vanish because of a complicated mix of politics, controversy and business.

Boxing had looked elsewhere, often anywhere, other than Tucson or Phoenix, Arizona's capitol and an NBA city that became something of a boxing hotbed in the early 1990s because of Carbajal. Never had a 108-pound fighter been an attraction. But Carbajal, a native Phoenician, was. He drew a couple of capacity crowds to the Suns' home arena. But the market faded as soon as his career did.

"As an attraction, there's never been anybody like Carbajal, before or since," said Truax, who moved to Phoenix from Dallas in the wake of Carbajal's career. "No little guy has ever had such big shoes. Over the last many years, Phoenix has looked for somebody to succeed him. But that's just not going to happen."

And then, more than a decade after Carbajal's inevitable decline and retirement, there was SB 1070, the state's immigration law passed in 2010. In the first wave of a national controversy that continues to this day, the Arizona legislature attempted to crack down on undocumented immigrants.

Among the law's many parts, it forced promoters to get fighters from other countries a work visa instead of a tourist visa. It was more expensive and more complicated to acquire. The first real impact was to a former Cuban Olympian, Erislandy Lara, who was not able to get the proper visa for a bout on a Golden Boy-promoted card at Desert Diamond Casino a few miles down the interstate, south of the exit for Casino Del Sol.

There were subsequent complaints about dealing with the Arizona State Boxing Commission. Meanwhile, in Mexico, there was outrage. The late Jose Sulaiman, then president of the Mexico City-based WBC, asked in an edict-like tone for Mexican fighters to boycott Arizona. Mexicans continued to fight in the state. Not even Sulaiman had the power to enforce a strike.

Nevertheless, the impact was unmistakable and – for a few years – devastating. Golden Boy ended its deal with Desert Diamond. Mexican advertisers decided to boycott the state out of fear that they would offend their customers.

Before the controversy caused by Arizona's passage of SB 1070 set in, Top Rank thought it had found a hometown star who could rebuild the Phoenix market in former amateur phenom Jose Benavidez Jr. But in 2010, Top Rank pulled a Benavidez-featured card out of Phoenix and moved it to Chicago because Azteca TV said it would not work in Arizona. Benavidez never did develop a local fan base.

After the courts overruled some elements of SB 1070, its impact began to fade. The market began to recover. Promoter Michelle Rosado moved into Phoenix with club cards despite resistance from all sides in a boxing market that had been rocked by more controversy, including the 2011 sentencing of promoter Peter McKinn to five months in jail for charges related to a scheme to defraud Yory Boy Campas.

"It was challenging," said Rosado, who grew up as a fight fan in Philadelphia. "There was some nasty stuff."

For Rosado, who helped Top Rank promote the Sept. 22 card in Tucson and has also been promoting in North Carolina, boxing in Phoenix was further complicated by the city's explosive growth. It had become a city with four big-league teams – the Suns, the NFL's Cardinals, baseball's Diamondbacks and the NHL's Coyotes. Like so many other newspapers, The Arizona Republic – the Phoenix daily and the biggest in the state – also stopped covering boxing despite a big fan base in a Latino community estimated to be 41 percent of the city's metro population of more than 4.5 million.

It was hard to get attention. Arizona-based promotional company Iron Boy Boxing continues to stage cards in Phoenix, but without a well-known hometown name or the attention boxing once used to get in The Republic. If Carbajal had emerged today instead of the early '90s in the aftermath of his silver medal at the 1988 Olympics, he might not have become a headliner, a star who in 1994 was the smallest fighter ever to earn a $1 million purse for a loss in a rematch with Humberto Gonzalez.

"It wouldn't have happened," Trampler said.

About 116 miles down I-10, however, there is chance for history to repeat itself in Tucson, where it all began anyway. RING

TOM HOGAN/HOGAN PHOTOS/GOLDEN BOY PROMOTIONS

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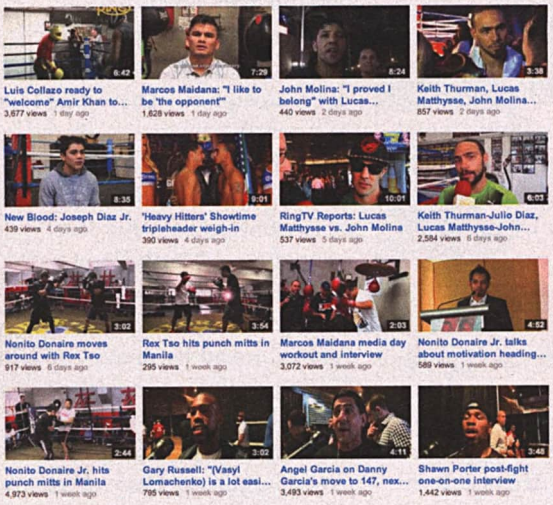

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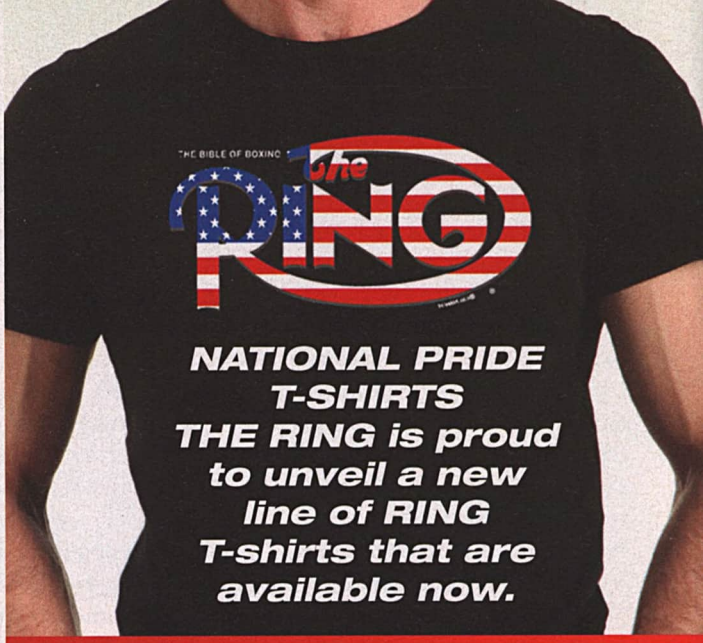

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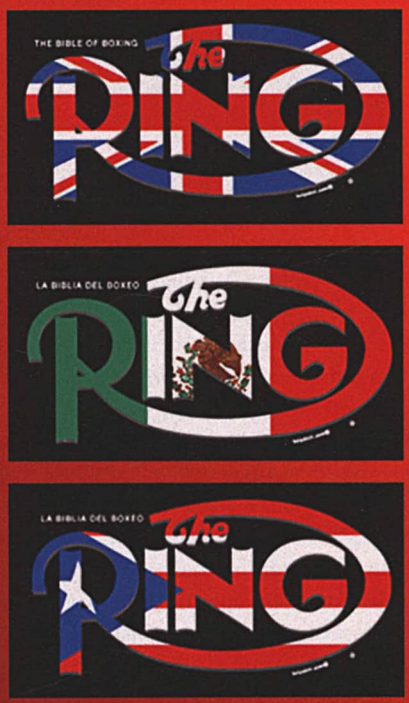

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COMING UP

DECEMBER

BILLY JOE SAUNDERS VS. DAVID LEMIEUX

Date: December 16
Location: Laval, Canada
Division: Middleweights (for Saunders' WBO title)
RING Ratings: Saunders No. 4; Lemieux No. 3
TV: HBO
Also fighting: Antoine Douglas vs. Gary "Spike" O'Sullivan, middleweights; Ryan Garcia vs. Noe Martinez, junior lightweights
Significance: Saunders (25-0, 12 KOs) will attempt to defend his WBO title for the third time against arguably his most formidable foe since he narrowly outpointed Chris Eubank Jr. in 2014. And the English southpaw is arguably Lemieux's most respected opponent since Gennady Golovkin, who stopped the Montreal native in eight rounds in 2015. Lemieux (38-3, 33 KOs) has won four in a row since that setback. This attractive boxer-vs.-puncher matchup pits two legit top-five middleweights in their primes against each other.

DECEMBER 14 – Diego De La Hoya (No. 4) vs. Jose Salgado, junior featherweights, Indio, California (ESPN2 / ESPN Deportes). Also, Carlos Morales vs. Dardan Zenunaj, junior lightweights
DECEMBER 15 – Alexander Povetkin (No. 5) vs. Christian Hammer, heavyweights, Ekaterinburg, Russia.
DECEMBER 30 – Naoya Inoue (No. 1, No. 8 P4P) vs. Yoan Boyeaux, junior bantamweights (for Inoue's WBO title), Yokohama, Japan. Also, Ken Shiro (No. 4) vs. Gilberto Pedroza, junior flyweights (for Shiro's WBC title).
DECEMBER 31 – Milan Melindo (No. 3) vs. Ryoichi Taguchi (No. 2), junior flyweights (for Melindo's IBF title and Taguchi's WBA title), Tokyo. Also, Hiroto Kyoguchi (No. 4) vs. Carlos Buitrago (No. 6), strawweights (for Kyoguchi's IBF title).

Welterweights Errol Spence Jr. (left) and Lamont Peterson headline one of the first major cards of 2018.

JANUARY

ERROL SPENCE JR. VS. LAMONT PETERSON

Date: January 20
Location: Brooklyn, New York
Division: Welterweights (for Spence's IBF title)
RING Ratings: Spence No. 2; Peterson No. 6
TV: Showtime
Also fighting: TBA
Significance: Spence (22-0, 19 KOs) convinced the boxing world that he's not only the heir apparent to the welterweight division, but also a future pound-for-pound player with his 11th-round KO of Kell Brook in May. Fans want to see the southpaw boxer-puncher vs. the likes of Terence Crawford and Keith Thurman, but they'll have to wait for those mega-matches. In the meantime, Spence will attempt to defend the IBF title he took from Brook against Peterson (35-3-1, 17 KOs), a battle-tested former junior welterweight titleholder.

JANUARY 6 – Isaac Dogboe vs. Cesar Juarez (No. 10), junior featherweights, Accra, Ghana.
JANUARY 12 – Claressa Shields vs. Tori Nelson, super middleweights (for Shields' IBF and WBC women's titles), Verona, New York.
JANUARY 16 – Donnie Nietes (No. 2) vs. Juan Carlos Reveco (No. 4), flyweights (for Nietes' IBF title), Macao.
JANUARY 27 – Jorge Linares (C) vs. Mercito Gesta, lightweights (for Linares' RING and WBA titles), Inglewood, California (HBO).

FEBRUARY

GEORGE GROVES VS. CHRIS EUBANK JR.

Date: February 17
Location: Manchester, England
Division: Super middleweights (for Groves' WBA title)
RING Ratings: Groves No. 3; Eubank No. 5
TV: ITV Box Office
Also fighting: TBA
Significance: Groves (27-3, 20 KOs) appears to have recaptured the form and confidence he had prior to back-to-back stoppages against Carl Froch with a six-bout win streak since his last setback, a split-decision loss to Badou Jack in 2015. However, the 29-year-old WBA titleholder is expected to receive a stern challenge from Eubank (26-1, 20 KOs), who has looked sensational since entering the 168-pound division at the start of this year. The showdown of British boxer-punchers is a semifinal bout of the World Boxing Super Series.

FEBRUARY 3 – Gilberto Ramirez (No. 2) vs. Habib Ahmed, super middleweights (for Ramirez's WBO title), Corpus Christi, Texas (ESPN). Also, Raymundo Beltran vs. TBA, lightweights (for vacant WBO title).
FEBRUARY 24 – Wisaksil Wangek (No. 2, No. 10 P4P) vs. Juan Francisco Estrada (No. 3), junior bantamweights (for Wangek's WBC title), Los Angeles.

BLOOD LUST

Marvin Hagler issued an ominous warning to Thomas Hearns at the morning weigh-in for their middleweight championship shootout on April 15, 1985: "You better hope I don't bleed. It only makes me meaner." Two minutes into the fiercest opening round of the modern era, Hagler's face was covered in blood from a cut on the bridge of his nose. When referee Richard Steele asked Hagler if he could see through the blood at the start of Round 3, the undisputed champ answered: "I ain't missing him, am I?" RING

By **Lamar Clark**

STYLES MAKE FIGHTS

QUIZ: WHOSE TRUNKS?

1.

2.

3.

4.

Answers: 1. Vasyl Lomachenko (4/8/17); 2. Muhammad Ali (10/1/75); 3. Gervonta Davis (8/26/17); 4. Conor Mcgregor (8/26/17).

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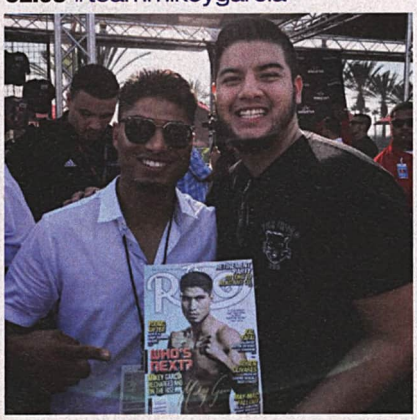

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